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EAT

YOUR DEFINITIVE GUIDE TO THE FOOD & DRINK
OF VICTORIA & VANCOUVER ISLAND

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Spot Prawn Season has arrived

artisan butters

Salt Spring wine

at the farmers markets

LOCAL STRAWBERRIES

Salad of mixed wild and farm greens with spot prawns

May | June I 2010 | Issue 14-03 | THIS COPY IS FREE

Local | Sustainable | Fresh | Seasonal

welcome



Why write about a few tiny islands in the Gulf of St. Lawrence - all the way across the country?

I first heard of Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine, an archipelago of small islands out in the Atlantic Ocean, through the *Slow Food movement*. Slow Food had begun cataloging rare and regional foods in danger of extinction under their "Ark of Taste" program and one of the first heritage foods picked in Canada to go under Ark protection was the *La Canadienne* cow, a hardy heritage breed known for being able to withstand the harsh Canadian climate. In my research I found there were only a few remaining herds of this breed and that one of those herds resided on Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine. What is special about this particular herd is that the milk produced by these cows go into the production of the renowned Pied-de-Vent cheese, a washed rind, raw milk cheese, found in top cheese stores across Canada and the USA.

Further investigation showed that Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine has a flourishing culinary ecosystem where many of the region's food products are inter-dependent on each other. Although not entirely unique in Canada (both Vancouver Island and the Charlevoix region of Quebec offer excellent examples), Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine is one of the most developed in this area of sustainability.

More than that, this remote place is boldly beautifully and warmly hospitable. For the adventurous foodie there are few places more worth visiting this coming summer. And I haven't even gotten to the seafood yet... *Story starts on page 22.*

Bon appétit,
Gary Hynes, Editor

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by Rebecca Baugniet

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May

OKANAGAN SPRING WINE FESTIVAL
The Okanagan Spring Wine Festival is a perfect marriage of wine and culinary tourism. For the first ten days in May each year, it offers a tantalizing experience for anyone who loves fabulous wine accompanied by fine cuisine. And what better way to announce the grape growing season than to hold a Festival during bud break! **April 30 - May 10** . www.thewinefestivals.com/springfestival.htm

WILD & ORGANIC BRUNCH IN KELOWNA
From **May 2 - May 9**, 11 am- 3pm, feast on an array of wild and organic food including breakfast & lunch items, fresh seafood bar, salads, Chef's carvery, dim sum, omelettes, amazing dessert array & more! Includes 'bubbly' and oj reception and live music! Location: 4870 Chute Lake Road, Kelowna. Call 250-764-8000 for more information.

AN EVENING WITH NK'MIP CELLARS WINERY
May 7 from 6:30 pm – 11 pm, enjoy an intimate night with Passa Tempo as we pair a fantastic multi-course dinner with award winning wines from NK'MIP Cellars: one of many Okanagan, BC wineries. Join us as we embark on a memorable evening with great food, wine and company as we kick off the Okanagan Spring Wine Festival. Chef Thauberger and his team have come up with a delectable course to complement each wine that they have selected from the NK'MIP Cellars Winery. Sit back, relax and prepare to be pampered as our staff takes you through a journey of food and wine to be remembered. Passa Tempo Restaurant, 1200 Rancher Creek Road, Osoyoos. 250-495-8007. Admission cost from $ 121.77.

VANCOUVER CRAFT BEER WEEK
Vancouver Craft Beer Week is a festival that will take place in numerous venues across the Greater Vancouver Region, from **May 10 - 16**. The festival will showcase local and international artisanal beer, and consist of signature festival events and independently organizes satellite events in participating retail stores and restaurants. The VCBW aims to attract the widest demographic possible, in order to further develop the craft beer culture of the region. *www.vancouvercraftbeerweek.com*

2ND ANNUAL COWICHAN BAY SPOT PRAWN FESTIVAL
The idea was hatched between local prawn fishermen and chefs to promote one of the most amazing and sustainable seafoods of our region. We are following in the footsteps of the successful joint venture between The Chefs Table Society and the Pacific Prawn Fishers Association who are now into the 4th year of their festival held at False Creek in Vancouver. Special Guest at this year's event will be Robert Clark, Executive Chef of C Restaurant in Vancouver, founding member of the Chef's Table Society and recipient of *Vancouver Magazine*'s Green Chef Award for 2009. This is a family friendly, fun day of chef demos, spot prawn sampling, music and spot prawn sales fresh off the boats. Local eateries will be featuring a spot prawn dish or menu for the week following the event. The day will be a great opportunity to learn cooking tips, sample great food and buy a fantastic local product – regarded as one of the best prawns anywhere. Restaurant participants include The Masthead, Hilary's Bistro, The Rockcod Cafe, Amuse Bistro and Deerholme Farm. The fresh prawn season starts around the first week of May and usually runs for about 8 weeks. "The goals of the spot prawn festivals are to highlight an environmentally sound and locally sourced product and to remind us that farmers markets don't stop at the waters edge" (The Chefs Table Society of BC). Saturday, **May 15**, 11:00 AM to 4:00 PM For more info on the Cowichan Bay Festival contact: Bill Jones 250-748-7450 *bill@magnorth.bc.ca*

JAMES BARBER BENEFIT FOR PROVIDENCE FARM
Enjoy six courses featuring local food and wine prepared by top BC Chefs from the Canadian Chefs Congress: Rob Clake, C Restaurant; Bill Jones, Deerholme Farm; Brock Windsor, Stone Soup Inn; Cory Pelan, La Piola, and more. Live music, **May 16**, from 1:00 pm - 5:00 pm. For ticket information call Providence Farm Info: 250-746-4204. $125/person, proceeds to the Providence Farm Woodburning Oven Project.

EXCLUSIVE WINES OF BURROWING OWL WORKSHOP
Join local Wine Expert, John Gerum, in Port Moody for an exciting evening sampling, discussing and analyzing exclusive Burrowing Owl wines that are rarely available to the general public. Wines will be matched to delicious gourmet cheese to enhance your tasting experience. This work shop sells out quickly so make sure to book early! Tuesday, **May 18**, from 7pm – 9pm. $60 per person (Includes registration fee, wine samples and materials). *pomoartscentre.ca*.

FARM TO TABLE DINNERS AT DEERHOLME FARM
Join Deerholme Farm for their innovative series of dinner events that combine the pleasure of a dinner party - with the educational program of the evening in a casual, unique environment. **May 22**, 5 pm – 9 pm: Asparagus and Spot Prawns. **June 19** Pasture-raised Cowichan Valley Meats $90 / person. 250-748-7450 *bill@magnorth.bc.ca*

4th ANNUAL SIDNEY HEALTH FAIR
The fourth annual Sidney Health Fair, happening **May 29 & 30** at the Mary Winspear Centre, will feature an exciting line up of keynote speakers from the best in the health and wellness field including Sam Graci (Greens+ founder), Lorna Vanderhaeghe, (author and women's health expert), fitness guru Brad King, Clive Langton, (Director of the Raw Food Society of BC), Dr. Kate Rhéaume-Bleue, (author, educator and naturopathic doctor) and Tamara Strijack, (clinical counselor). Presented by the Sidney Integrated Wellness Community Society (SIWC). Tickets at the door are $7 for adults, $5 for students and seniors, and children 12 and under are free. For tickets, call the Mary Winspear Centre at 250.656.0275 or visit *www.sidneyhealthfair.com*

June

ADVENTURES IN NORTHERN COOKING RECEPTION
Many have been captivated by the rugged beauty and wilderness of the north. The Boreal Gourmet: Adventures in Northern Cooking by Michele Genest captures the culinary soul of the north. As much a culinary adventure story as a cookbook, The Boreal Gourmet combines a portrait of northern life with an exploration of wild foods inspired by a diversity of countries, traditions and indigenous foods of the Yukon. This evening author and cook, Michele Genest, brings us a taste of the delicious north with a cooking demonstration and hors d'oeuvres based on foods north of sixty. Thursday, **June 3**, 6:00 p.m. at Barbara-Jo's Books to Cooks in Vancouver. Cost: $45.00 (Includes a signed copy of The Boreal Gourmet) (*www.bookstocooks.com/*)

4th ANNUAL COMOX VALLEY SHELLFISH FESTIVAL
Located in British Columbia's shellfish capital, the 4th Annual Comox Valley Shellfish Festival will be taking place **June 19 & 20** at multiple locations in the Comox, including the historic Filberg Lodge. Join local food and wine producers along with culinary professionals from some of the area's best restaurants for a gastronomic tour-de-force celebrating locally grown shellfish. For information or tickets visit *www.comoxvalleyshellfishfestival.ca* or call 250-890-7561.

TOFINO FOOD AND WINE FESTIVAL
Head to Tofino for a weekend of food and wine events focused on the best of British Columbia. Guest winemakers from the Okanagan, Lower Mainland, Gulf Islands and Vancouver Island will migrate to the wild west coast to showcase their best. Local chefs will be creating canapés and feature dinners alongside winemakers, highlighting the marriage between food and wine! An eclectic community makes for a delicious combination of people and flavours on this lauded June week-end, from **June 4-6**, with a series of events designed to tickle all palates. For more information, visit www.tofinofoodandwinefestival.com.

DEFENDING OUR BACKYARD

The Island Chefs' Collaborative's 3rd Annual Defending Our Backyard local food festival and farm fundraiser will be held Sunday, May 30th, from 12 pm -4 pm. Defending Our Backyard celebrates Island food, farms and flavours at the picturesque Fort Rodd Hill & Fisgard Lighthouse National Historic Sites in Colwood. The event focuses on personal experience and, in addition to sampling some tastes of the Island, participants will also learn about growing more of their own food, composting, the ethical harvest of seafood, local wineries and breweries, the work of food-related special interest groups and farmers' markets. Tickets are available at Spinnaker's, Smoken Bones Cookshack, Crossroads Bar and Grill, La Piola and more. (*www.iccbc.ca*)

OTTAVIO'S 6TH ANNUAL FESTA ITALIANA
Visit Ottavio for their 6th annual Festa Italiana, Saturday **June 19**, from 11 am- 3 pm, where you can see their Italian Market in the piazza in front of Ottavio and taste, sip. & enjoy the foods & sounds of Italy. This year we will have tastings of Italian wines, Italian cheese from Tuscany & olive oil tastings and grilled lamb sandwiches by Galloping Goose Sausages. Don't miss our lineup of exotic & fast Italian cars, motorcycles & scooters! For more information contact Ottavio at 250-592-4080.

MARA'S FIELD-TO-TABLE COOKING CLASSES
Fairburn Farm's Saturday Cooking Classes are going out to the garden! Enjoy a real field to table cooking experience at Fairburn Farm. Classes commence on Saturday, **June 26th** at 10 AM in the garden at Fairburn where you'll spend time harvesting fresh produce, foraging for wild foods and gathering eggs. Together with Mara Jernigan, you'll plan the day's menu before heading into the kitchen to cook together and enjoy a mid afternoon snack of fresh pizza from Mara's wood burning brick oven. The day will culminate around the table where you will enjoy the fruits of your labour with a sampling of some great local wine. $135. + GST per person, payment in advance. Last chance to enjoy a summer's day on Fairburn Farm with Mara, as she is leaving the farm in the fall. For more information, visit *www.fairburnfarm.bc.ca*.

If you have a food or wine event you would like to see listed in the next issue of EAT, please email editor@eatmagazine.ca and put Concierge Desk in the subject line.

quick **getaways**

Point of View: *Out past Sooke, on the rugged West Coast Road, a resort with a funny name, amazing views and a first-rate restaurant makes an ideal early spring getaway.*

On an ink-black evening this past December, my wife and I treated some dear friends to a meal at **Point-No-Point** Resort's Tea House Restaurant and a weekend at the 58-year-old resort's newest vacation rental, the Bridge House.

The quirkily named property (it's a map-making term) 25 kilometres past Sooke on the West Coast Road sits on a rugged 16-hectare plot of ocean frontage overlooking the Strait of Juan de Fuca. The Bridge House, urban-modern yet comfy with its Asian-influenced furnishings, floor-to-ceiling windows, wood-burning fireplace and private hot tub, is a luxurious refuge from civilization.

Dinner is supremely civilized, however, thanks to the resort's very youthful chef Jason Nienaber. Nienaber, reflecting on his 11-year career at the Point-No-Point restaurant with a combination of optimism and humour, told me, "I have been an avid fisher, well, forever and I got a dream gift for Christmas – my first bird gun ... Can I mention that I have a gun? The owners, Stuart and Sharon Soderburgh, give me a free hand here. I wanted to create charcuterie unique to the region, and the Soderburghs got me the equipment I needed. I wanted a smoker and a dryer – and I got it."

As we sip on a variety of wines, we dive directly into our mains: my wife, a perfectly prepared 10 oz. New York steak, served with a sarsaparilla demi-glace balanced with fingerling potatoes and a medley of vegetables—steamed within microseconds of perfection. Our friends chose the Island chicken breast and an in-house jerked pork loin, each of those with a cross section of pan-fried chanterelles, house-smoked bacon and a complement of the local fresh vegetables. I enjoy the baked halibut with the chanterelles, served on a risotto and a trio of cauliflower, broccoli and asparagus.

While placing our order, I muse to the server about a meal during the summer (when the restaurant's spectacular sunset views can be fully appreciated). That day my halibut was served on corn chowder, capped with a hog jowl fritter, and I recount with some emphasis the exquisite tenderness of the jowl. Within minutes, Chef delivers a single-bite-sized hog jowl toast to our table—a half-inch-square morsel on a razor-thin whole-wheat toast with a grainy Dijon mustard.

For the uninitiated, hog jowl is the tender cheek meat, cut into thin strips—often less than a quarter-inch thick, smoked and cured. It can be used in stews and soups or served as incredibly rich and decadent bacon.

My wife and I visit Point-No-Point, on average, three times a year—and we have done so for the past five years. In that time, I have seen chef Nienaber's interpretation of local classics evolve from brazen to confident with whimsical twists. He has come a long way in his 11 years at Point-No-Point and being only 31 years of age, has a bright future.

Chef Jason enjoys a well-equipped kitchen, a very supportive, young and enthusiastic team, including sous-chef Ian Carr—and wonderful resort owners. And with the ability to frame his menu based on the time of year and the availability of the best local ingredients, Jason and Ian can freely tweak the menu week by week to achieve consistency and accolades from the resort's guests who, by all account, are as loyal as we are to this unique resort perched on its wild and rocky stretch of island coastline. *—By Colin Newell*

10829 West Coast Road, (250) 646-2020, www.pointnopointresort.com

CUMIN'S CHARISMA

For the author, a mere whiff conjures up a dreamy tide of exotica.

In all of Earth's cuisines, no spice box compares with Mother India's kitchen. Roaring with cumin, coriander, cardamom, ginger, garlic, saffron, tamarind and chilies, it's a symphony of spices that can play as melodiously on the palate as Shankar to the ear.

With so much to work with, it's hard to blame the Indian cook for choosing them all. In Indian homes, this translates as curry—not the generic powder devised by the colonizing English, but any meld of freshly ground spices—and boasts almost as many variations as there are gods and goddesses in the Hindu pantheon (33 million at last count).

But in most restaurants—and the world's dodgiest restaurant scene at that—it emerges as a tasty but undefined muck. Accomplished Indian is hard to find. It doesn't exist on the Island. Vancouver has Vij's. Vij's works. Modern Indian works best when the cooks know enough to muzzle the orchestra and allow the soloists their own dazzling turns in the spotlight. Bye-bye bombast, hello finesse.

Of the stellar players, I'm torn between cumin and cardamom. Here I'm going with the former but I hope my editor will allow me to talk about cardamom another day. I love cumin. If food is sex, cumin is Helen of Troy, Cleopatra and Angelina Jolie rolled into one.

It's the rare spice that *didn't* originate in India. And it wasn't always food, either. A distant relative to parsley, it's native to the Middle East, probably Syria. The Egyptians used it to make mummies. The Romans, magically, turned it into a symbol for greed and nicknamed the Roman Emperor Marcus Aurelius "Cuminus." Most fancifully, Europeans believed it kept spouses from roaming. All you had to do was leave a handful of seeds under the bed.

Its healthy properties in India and elsewhere were manifold. These included aiding digestion, defeating toxins, relieving flatulence, battling diarrhea, smiting the common cold, reducing nausea in pregnant woman, enlarging the breasts and reducing swollen testicles. Don't laugh: Indians, with their 5,000 years of trial and error with human health, were on to something.

It made its way to Europe during the Muslim conquest of Spain that lingered for 800 years. Cumin remains a staple in the Spanish kitchen. Nowadays, it's the world's second most popular spice after black pepper. Its spell reaches out from India and the Middle East to such far-flung places as Holland, where it makes gouda cheese interesting, and Texas, where it struts its stuff in Tex-Mex. In Morocco, it wafts through marketplaces, a mere whiff conjuring up a dreamy tide of exotica.

Here the website *www.cafepress.ca* salutes the hallowed spice with "*I love cumin*" T-shirts, sweatshirts, hoodies, baby bodysuits, boxer shorts, posters, bumper stickers and mugs. "Give me cumin or give me death," reads another slogan in the product line.

In Victoria, cumin is the predominant aroma—pungent, aggressive, seductive—in Indian and Middle Eastern grocery stores. Try making cumin tea: Toast and gently crush a teaspoon of cumin seed to release aroma and flavour. Stir the seed in a cup of boiling water and allow to steep for 10 minutes. A little chicken stock or garlic further enhances. Often served after a meal in India as an inducer of sleep, it's a delightful brew any time at all.

I'll take cumin just about any way I can get it. My favourite is a Spanish dish, cumin chicken. She takes four plump Cowichan Valley chicken breasts and six teaspoons of toasted, crushed cumin seed, three times what the recipe recommends. I don't want a hint of cumin. I want a *statement*.

She presses the seed with a little salt and pepper into both sides of each skin-on, boneless breast. She places each breast skin-side-down in a frying pan. She fries it over medium heat until the skin becomes a crispy crust. She flips and finishes the other side. I stand by, panting like a bloodhound.

What she doesn't know is, I've also swiped a handful of cumin seed and slipped them under the bed. A chef like this, you don't want her wandering.





artisan foods — by **Janet Nicol**

THE BETTER BUTTER

Fresh artisan butters made from local cream and churned on site are a simple pleasure.

When it comes to fresh butter, only a few artisan brands qualify for the 100 Mile Diet for Vancouverites. Butter lovers may be surprised to learn that most products on supermarket shelves are made from cream churned in Calgary—or even further afield. An exception: cultured butter freshly churned at the Farm House in Agassiz. Its pristine ingredients include cream from Guernsey and Brown Swiss cows grazing on corn and grass in B.C.'s lush Fraser Valley.

Twice a week co-owner Debra Amrein-Boyes churns cream into butter. Then, using a Swiss mold, this master cheesemaker makes an imprint of an edelweiss flower on each 200-gram brick and wraps them in gold foil.

You can visit the store on the family-run farm, but the butter is also available in Vancouver. The cheese shop Les Amis du Fromage (1752 W. 2nd Ave., 845 E. Hastings and 518 Park Royal South in West Vancouver) sells it for $7.99, and Whole Foods in West Vancouver also has the product on its shelves. In Victoria, get it at Choux Choux Charcuterie on Fort Street.

Alice Spurrell, co-owner of Les Amis du Fromage, is happy to vouch for the butter's popularity. "Lots of local chefs buy it," she says. "And we have many repeat customers. They like to use it as a table butter for toast or on a muffin." The rich taste and freshness of Farm House butter is obvious when compared to other brands, she says. "The French like to put a small amount of fresh butter on a cheese plate. They spread the butter on a baguette, then add a slice of cheese on top. The taste is delicious." Clearly the French know how to eat their dairy products.

Spurrell's cheese shop stocks a steady supply of Farm House butter, but customers should still check before coming in. "It is a special item," she says. "And sometimes the demand is high. We had a run on the product when chefs were using the butter during the Olympics."

Executive chef Andrea Carlson says Bishop's has been using Farm House butter for as long as she has been at the restaurant. "It is used as the table butter and has a sweet, fresh flavour and colour that varies throughout the season as the cows graze on different plants. I'm a huge fan of Farm House and all of their products and I'm delighted that they have been able to supply us with their highly coveted butter."

A visit to the Farm House, only a five-minute drive from the village of Agassiz, reveals a picturesque property complete with a brick-red barn, pastures filled with cows, goats and sheep, stunning mountain scenery and attractive gardens. Inside the shop are an array of local food and gift products, a fridge stocked with cheeses, milk, fresh eggs and cheesecake, and copies of Amrein-Boyes's book, *200 Easy Homemade Cheese Recipes: From Cheddar and Brie to Butter and Yogurt*. The young woman at the till welcomes customers with tasting samples of Farm House cheddars and bries. A viewing window faces a cheese-making room bristling with modern stainless steel equipment. Customers can watch Amrein-Boyes and other employees making their artisan foodstuffs.

"Farm House butter has a deep natural colour that can vary with the season and what the cows are eating," says Amrein-Boyes as she dons a hair net. "The pasteurized cream is separated from the milk and inoculated with lactic bacteria culture. As the cream ripens, the process creates flavour compounds that give our butter that rich European-style flavour."

Amrein-Boyes slips off her shoes and steps into a large pair of rubber boots. She opens a door to the sanitized workroom and then steps in and out of a small tub of blue liquid. "The cream is processed in this small electric churn," she says, bending to lift the lid of a small stainless steel churn on the floor. Inside are blades attached to a revolving device. "I pour in 12 litres at a time, producing a rich creamy butter, with 84 percent fat."

The Farm House product has a smoother consistency than most commercial butters made with industrial-size continuous churns. As well, her product has a slightly higher fat content (most have 80 percent fat), adding to the rich, creamy flavour. Most important for many food lovers, Farm House butter has no artificial additives. You may want to cut a brick in portions to share with family and friends or use promptly in baking projects; this fresh butter has only a two-week shelf life.

Amrein-Boyes's husband tends to the 25 milking cows (as well as a herd of goats) that graze more than 35 acres of land. The couple's four daughters—all grown up now—have spent many hours working on the farm, and additional employees help with the many daily

farm routines.

In her own kitchen, Amrein-Boyes says she likes to uses her butter to make shortbread. But, she says, there is also just the simple pleasure of spreading a thick layer of butter on homemade bread.

The trend in the past 20 years has been to disband local creameries and centralize butter production. “Butter-making regulations call for some very specific equipment so it does not make an easy sideline,” says Julia Grace, an artisan cheesemaker at Moonstruck Organic Cheese on Salt Spring Island. Grace says she makes butter only for her own use.

Nevertheless, many fine butters from other parts of B.C. and Canada can be purchased in British Columbia stores. Those with dairy allergies, or a craving for a more pungent taste, can travel to Chilliwack to buy the all-purpose Happy Days Goat Butter, purchased in a frozen tub at $9.49. (The original goat farm is in Salmon Arm, B.C.) The butter contains pasteurized goat cream, cooled then churned. The butter kernels are washed with water to flush out milk protein and lactose, allowing longer product preservation. Consumers are advised to slice and thaw butter as needed. As well, Sterling butter in Ontario has won international awards. Two imported butters from France, Beurre Echire and Beurre D’Isigny, are also available at Les Amis du Fromage at $14.95 for 250 grams. In Victoria, Ottavio carries butters from both Quebec and France.

Still, as every person who has grown up on a farm knows, the fresh taste of locally churned butter is a treat to be savoured.

The Farm House is located at 5634 McCallum Rd., Agassiz, B.C. V0M 1A1.
Phone: 604-796-8741, *www.farmhousecheeses.com*.
Happy Days Dairy/Heavenly Cheese store is located at 7350 A Barrow Rd., Chilliwack, B.C. Its retail store is open Wednesday to Saturday, noon to 5 p.m.
Phone: 604-823-7241, *www.happydaysdairy.com*.



Specialty Food Magazine launches

To help small scale food processors make the most of what the future holds, the **Small Scale Food Processor Association** has launched *Specialty Foods Magazine*, a full-colour publication dedicated to raising awareness of the unique challenges, and increasing opportunities, faced by small scale food processors. Demand for local specialty food items is growing as part of the “think local” trend - with the specialty food industry in Canada posting year over year growth of 25%. The magazine is also available for download at *www.ssfpa.net* in the What’s New section.

in store — by **Greg Pratt**

DO TRY THIS AT HOME

The sale of single-ingredient grocery items tells savvy trend-spotters that home cooking is on the rise



Rebecca Wellmam

Pictured left: Ambrosio co-owner Paul DeMedeiros in his Oak Bay store

Call it an aftershock of the recession's effects, but one of the emerging food trends right now is an increase in sales of single-ingredient items. And the rising popularity of things like flour, olive oil and eggs indicate that more people are doing more cooking in their own kitchens—often, they're even getting a bit daring about it.

"We're seeing people buying ingredients like specialty balsamics, spice rubs and condiments," says Angelina Street of Brambles Market in Courtenay. "People seem to want to experiment a little more with their food." Street adds that these specialty versions of staples are selling well because of the rise of both allergies and special diets. And, hey, people are enjoying spicing things up.

"People are looking for different options to make their food taste good. Specialty flours have also proven to be popular," she says, adding that True Grain Bakery's Red Fife wheat is a good example.

In Victoria, Jodi De Medeiros, who with her husband John are partners in Ambrosio Markets & Deli, says that this is an upside to the economy's downturn: because people are hesitant—or unable—to spend the money at restaurants, they get educated in healthy eating at home. "When the economy suffers, people learn to be better cooks and, in turn, educate themselves as to how simple it really is to eat quality food that they cooked on their own," she says. "These newly educated consumers are now buying olive oils or vinegars for different types of meals, they know the difference between Italian arborio and jasmine rice, and they even begin asking their small local grocers how to cook those unique foods that before, they might have passed by when seeing them on the shelves."

Douglas Bourque, grocery manager for the Market on Yates in Victoria, says they too are seeing a consistent rise in the sales of single-ingredient items. He echoes De Medeiros's views when he says that not only are more people cooking at home, but they are learning how to cook better at home.

"Our sales in quality extra-virgin olive oils have steadily increased over the last six months," he says. "We are also seeing an increase in alternative flours—for example, quinoa or 00 grade wheat flour—which indicates that people may be more open to trying new things in the kitchen. As money becomes tight, people may be taking what used to be their restaurant budget and using it at the grocery store in an attempt to stretch a dollar."

Brambles' Street feels that a core group of people will continue to do lots of cooking at home but says that we need to place more value on our food before a real home-cooking movement can happen.

"Not necessarily a monetary value—though we really should be willing to spend a bit more on our food—but on the time that we are willing to give to it," she says. "And we need to get rid of our instant-gratification ideals. We really need to value food as part of our health and how it impacts our lives on the whole. If you eat garbage, you feel like garbage. Real food does not need to take much time for preparation; it just needs a shift in our priorities."

But that shift might not come too soon: Bourque isn't too convinced this trend is here to stay and he won't call it the beginning of a home-cooking movement. But he feels it's a very positive thing, even if it is something that may peak this year then slow down for 2011.

"I don't think anyone will regret having learned to be a better cook at home," says Bourque, "and once they've learned new things, perhaps they'll be more inclined to continue cooking more themselves."

Perhaps it's erroneous to call this a trend at all. Perhaps it's a new beginning, one pleasant by-product of an unpleasant recession: the beginning of a new era of healthier eating at home and of educated food consumers. At least that's what Ambrosio's John De Medeiros is hoping.

"Even when times improve, the trend will continue," he says, "as people will realize now how easy it is to cook at home for themselves or to entertain friends."

Ghivetch (pronounced you-vetch)

This delicious vegetable casserole originated in Yugoslavia, Romania and Bulgaria, and it is a traditional dish for Jewish immigrants from the Balkans. Ghivetch is often served with yogurt or sour cream as a vegetarian dish, but some recipes include fish, beef, bacon, veal or duck. Its name comes from guvec, the Turkish word for a stew cooked in an earthenware pot. *Serves 12 to 15 people*

4 medium onions, diced
1 1/2 cups extra virgin olive oil
6 small new potatoes, peeled and cubed
5 carrots, sliced
1 unpeeled eggplant, cubed
1/4 lb. string beans, trimmed and cut in julienne strips
1 green pepper, seeded and cut into strips
1 small head of cabbage, shredded
1 small cauliflower, broken into florets
1 lb. fresh lima beans, shelled
1 parsnip, diced
1 large celery root, peeled and diced
1 turnip, cubed
2 small zucchinis, cubed
3 leeks (white parts only), sliced
1 lb. okra, cut in thick slices
8 tomatoes, peeled, seeded and coarsely chopped
1/2 cup parsley, minced
8 to 12 cloves garlic
1 cup sour grapes or 2 sour plums
salt and pepper to taste
Yogurt or sour cream (optional)

In a 5-quart Dutch oven or large heavy stainless steel pot, heat 1/2 cup of olive oil over medium heat and slowly sauté onions until golden brown. Add the vegetables, herbs and fruit, season with salt and pepper and stir. In a saucepan, heat one cup of olive oil and pour it over the vegetables. Place the lid on the pot and cook over moderate heat until the liquids begin boiling. Preheat the oven to 350 F. Place the covered pot in the oven and cook 1 to 1 1/2 hours or until all of the vegetables are cooked and most of the liquids have evaporated. Stir gently once or twice during cooking. (If it dries out during cooking, add a bit of stock or water.) Taste and adjust seasoning. Serve with yogurt or sour cream.

Variation: To make Gevetch de Peshte, rub a 5 pound trout inside and out with olive oil. Dust with flour or breadcrumbs. Mix seasoned vegetables with herbs and 3 tablespoons of olive oil and place in a large casserole dish. Place the fish on top and fill it with some vegetables. Scatter diced onions on top and add 1 cup of water. Baste fish with liquid from the casserole during cooking. Cook at 350 F for 50 minutes until vegetables are tender and fish is lightly browned on top.

FLASH IN THE PAN

These delectable fruits and vegetables are only available for a short time.

Fresh **FAVA BEANS** are only available from March to June, from California or local farms. Slide the beans out of their inedible green pods and blanch them briefly. Remove their tough skins before cooking the beans. Use fava beans instead of lima beans in ghivetch.

Sweet juicy **LYCHEE NUTS** have a thin, rough, red outer shell. These beautiful fruits are only available from May to July.

The peak season for **FIDDLEHEADS** is May and June. This wild delicacy tastes like a combination of asparagus, artichokes, mushrooms and green beans.

Fresh **LIMA BEANS** are only available from June to September. Look for plump, firm, dark green pods. Shell the beans from their inedible pods just before cooking them.

The peak season for B.C. and locally grown **ASPARAGUS** is from April to May.

California-grown **APRICOTS** are at their peak of flavour in May and June.

The peak season for juicy, mildly sweet **PEPINO MELONS** is from March to June. These fragrant melons have beautiful gold rinds with violet stripes.

Look for locally grown red and green **GOOSEBERRIES** from June to August. These tart berries are delicious in pies, jams and jellies and in gooseberry fool. They are high in pectin and an excellent source of vitamin C.

good for **you** — by **Pam Durkin**

DYNANMIC DUOS

Science now tells us that certain food pairings add up to more than the sum of their parts.

Strawberries and cream, peanut butter and jelly. Some foods were just made for each other. But perfect culinary pairings are about more than just taste. There is a new branch of food science looking into the phenomenon of "food synergy"; the idea that certain foods, when paired together, are even more nutritious than when they are eaten separately. Here are just a few of the healthy power pairs researchers have uncovered.

Honey and yogurt

Honey's reputation as a sweetener with little nutritional value is undeserved. It is actually teeming with healthy antioxidants and minerals. But while it shines on its own, it REALLY steps into the nutritional spotlight when paired with yogurt or milk. Research conducted at Michigan State University has shown that adding honey to yogurt enhances the growth, activity and viability of bifidobacteria—a group of bacteria that are important to the health and proper functioning of the GI tract. In a somewhat similar study, researchers at Purdue University discovered that adding honey to dairy products like yogurt or milk enhanced calcium uptake. Do your bones and your tummy a favour by indulging in this dynamic duo more often.

Green tea and lemon

Scientists now believe regular consumption of green tea can help prevent cardiovascular disease, cancer and even osteoporosis. The compound thought to be responsible for most of green tea's health benefits is a catechin called ECGC. The problem is, catechins are relatively unstable in non-acidic environments such as the intestines, and less than 20 percent of the total remains in the body after digestion. That means you have to drink a LOT of green tea to reap its health benefits. Unless, it seems, you add lemon to the brew. Researchers at Purdue University recently discovered that when lemon juice is added to green tea, 80 percent of the tea's catechins remain in the body. For maximum flavour and health, Daniela Cubelic of Silk Road Aromatherapy and Tea Co. stresses that "only fresh lemon should be used and added after the tea has been properly brewed, not beforehand." Cubelic adds that jasmine green tea pairs beautifully with lemon. "The flavour is sophisticated, intoxicating—almost like a cocktail."

Burger and frozen yogurt

The next time you eat a meal high in saturated fat, like a burger, follow it with a low-fat, calcium-rich dessert. A study published in the December 2005 issue of the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* showed that calcium aids in fat oxidation (burning). In the study, normal-weight women were randomly assigned to a low (less than 800 mg) or a high (1,000-1,400 mg per day) calcium diet for one year. The rate at which their bodies burned fat after a meal was assessed at the beginning and end of the study. After one year, fat oxidation was 20 times higher in the women eating the high-calcium diet compared to those in the low-calcium control group. The perfect excuse to stock the freezer with Island Farm's frozen yogurt or Mario's Gelato!

Cinnamon and carbs

We've all heard the bad news about simple, but sometimes undeniably delicious, high glycemic-index carbs. They raise your blood sugar and impair your body's response to insulin. But who doesn't enjoy the odd Danish or doughnut? Carb-loving foodies need not despair. Spicing up a high-carb food with cinnamon can help lessen its impact on your blood sugar levels. Cinnamon slows the rate at which the stomach empties after meals, reducing the rise in blood sugar after eating. Dozens of studies have demonstrated this fact, and researchers say as little as a quarter to a half teaspoon of ground cinnamon is all that is needed to achieve beneficial effects. Next time you're hankering for one of Bubby Rose's famous cinnamon buns, indulge with impunity.

Broccoli and tomatoes

Both of these nutritional superstars can stand alone as healthy additions to any meal. But when combined, they are a match made in health heaven. In a study published in the December 2004 issue of the *Journal of Nutrition*, prostrate tumours grew much less in rats that were fed tomatoes and broccoli than in rats that ate diets containing broccoli alone or tomatoes alone. (Or diets that contained cancer-fighting substances that had been isolated from tomatoes or broccoli.) The take-home message: This culinary marriage is one of nature's most successful synergies. Enjoy it as often as you can.

You're relaxing at home with your besties and a few bottles of wine. You've had your favourite charcuterie and cheeses fed-exed from around the world. What meats and cheeses are on your plate?

Mara Jernigan- Fairburn Farm 250.746.4637
Every autumn I bring guests on a culinary tour of Italy and we always spend November 1st, the Day of the Dead, having a fantastic multi-course lunch at Paradiso di Peppe Zullo. When my great friend, chef Peppe Zullo from Orsara di Puglia, came to visit me he brought some wonderful Cacciacavallo and Pecorino cheeses, freshly pressed olive oil and a jar of fresh white truffles from Molise which I was able to share with the culinary students at Vancouver Island University, where I was substitute teaching. I was also lucky enough to be able to take Peppe Zullo to two of my favourite restaurants on the island, Zambri's and Sooke Harbour House, where chefs Peter, Louis, and Sam Benedetto pulled out all the stops. Sam even gave Peppe a piece of his excellent house-made Cappicollo.

Garrett Schack- Vista 18 250.361.5698
I wouldnt have to have anything fed-exed in! I'd let Andrew and his staff at Ottavio work out all the details for me. My only request would be that they include some delicious Vancouver Island Prosciutto.

Trish Dixon- Breakers Fresh Food Cafe 250.725.2558
Love that I am relaxing with friends and wine! As for meats and cheeses, I prefer to have some wonderful local accompaniments like wild smoked salmon and cold smoked tuna from West Pacific Seafoods in Tofino- like nothing you have ever tasted! As for cheese, I am loving Natural Pastures new smoked Boerenkaas and their Aged Farmhouse. Local and direct from Courtenay and Tofino, no fed-ex required!

Ben Peterson- Heron Rock Bistro 250.383.1545
I love to eat this way and am not picky about what's on the plate—tasting new or unfamiliar things is always the most exciting! As far as readily available mainstays, I'll go with a spicy Sopressata salami and St.Agur blue cheese.

Jon Smid- Bon Rouge 250.220.8008
Well, I'll give you the short list. I'd ship in some goose and duck prosciutto from Oyama Sausage Co. on Granville Island, this stuff is like meat candy to me! Next a couple links of Hungarian szegedi from my favorite deli in my hometown of Ottawa—I've been munching on this stuff since I was little and this spicy, savory pork sausage just can't be beat! An obvious choice would be a foie gras terrine or some truffle shavings on toast with a nice French sea salt from Noirmoutier. Just to try, Tyrolian speck from Val d'Ultimo, Italy—a whole deboned pig carcass that's smoked in a high elevation cabin for a year. Beddis Blue from Moonstruck, St-Ambroise beer cheese from Quebec, a softly heated Cambozola from Germany, and fresh squeaky cheese curds! The bread would be from Bon Rouge, the wine would be Samuel's Gorge Tempranillo and a Gewurtz from OZ, and a bottle of Twisted Tree Six Vines from the Okanagan. That would just get me started!

Alberto Pozzolo- La Piola 250.388.4557
My meats and cheeses come via Ottavio as trade for our bread production for them. I like to keep it local as much as possible so along with our fresh organic yeast-free bread I would have Saltspring Island Saint Jo Feta and Peppercorn Chevre, Prosciutto Sgambato and Saucisson Traditional from Oyama and Ottavio.

Laurie Munn- Cafe Brio 250.383.0009
If I was relaxing at home, it would be with my little girl and wife. We would have some Comte, l'Edel de Cleron and Doux Coeur. These cheeses come from the Franche Comte region of France where I used to live when I was a competitive cyclist. When we went to someone's home, Comte and l'Edel would be served, and the Doux Coeur was a cheese I used to snack on like an apple on the way home from the velodrome where I trained. I tend to be pretty partial to the fine salumi and charcuterie produced by the fine folks at Cafe Brio. Did that shameless self promotion sound sincere? Doesn't matter, I meant it!

restaurant reporter — by Gillie Easdon

Dish Cookhouse Diner | 2031 Malaview Avenue, Sidney | 250-655-5295 | www.dishcookhouse.com
Monday-Friday 730-330, Saturday-Sunday 9-2


Gen Laplante

Chef Chris Gurr with The Cookhouse Platter

'Meat, glorious meat'. That was the thought I woke up to that morning. My second Sunday 8am thought? Ribs. Game on.

Fortunately, I had heard tantalizing rumours about Dish Cookhouse Diner, located just past Sidney off McDonald Park Road in an industrial park. Tales of house cured and smoked meat, pulled pork, house made sausages, and, alas, ribs. I launched myself into the car with a friend and off we sped, on our meat-driven mission.

We arrived at 10am, grabbed seats and perused the menu. I immediately spotted it, The Cookhouse Platter. BBQ ribs, fried chicken with chili or Asian style dip with grilled sausage and onion gravy. However, it was on the lunch menu. The server double checked with the chef to see if he could do this for breakfast. He emerged from the kitchen to have a look at us, "Oh yeah! I love making those!" he beamed, smile spreading across his face like fast melting butter. Fantastic. So, one Platter, one Corned Beef Hash with house cured beef, grilled onion and potato hash and fresh herbs and two coffees. Other tempting offerings included the special house smoked turkey ham and asparagus Bennie and the egg dipped bread pudding, grilled house smoked ham with eggs. For those more on the sweet side of breakfast, the coconut oat encrusted French toast, fresh banana maple syrup and vanilla butter sounded like something luscious to roll around in.

Our timing was perfect, as the restaurant filled up within thirty minutes of ordering, but there were still some tables available. The Norah Jones, Jewel and Sting mix threw me back, but not quite as far as the general décor, which was more low key functional comfort wear than trendy. The lack of self-consciousness or meticulously crafted ambience was really welcoming, unpretentious and kept our eyes on the prize.

Then the feast began. The house made cumin pork sausages in hog casing were lean but lush. The buttermilk fried chicken was juicy, the corned beef hash was salty and rich, the poached eggs aloft the hash were exactly soft poached and the ribs were succulent. I mentioned that our timing was perfect, but it was nothing compared to the chef's. Everything was tender and "just" cooked. Just right, delicate and perfect. I savored that palpable angel-chorus 'bar is risen' moments at Dish Cookhouse Diner.

Chef and co-owners Chris Gurr and Geoff Pinch chose the unusual location because, "Sidney has not really got to where it could be, not to say that we (singlehandedly) are going to take it there... But Sidney is ready for something new and fresh, a higher quality product," shares Chris, whose most recent gig was as a private chef on James Island. These two dynamic meatsmiths cure, smoke, stuff and invent all onsite with a Cookshack stainless steel single element smoker. Geoff, who worked with Edward Tuson (EdGe, Sooke Harbour House) at Sooke Harbour House is revered as the "sausage man."

Dish Cookhouse Diner has my full attention and they are gearing up to open for licensed dinners in May. Prepare yourself for a platter of braised pork belly, duck confit and grilled sausage. This is a chill, for the love of food destination to find time to go to again very soon. Next time, maybe on a healthy bike excursion. But then again, maybe not.

eating well for less — by **Elizabeth Smyth**

Venus Sophia Tea Room | 540 Fisgard Ave | Victoria | 250.590.3953



Rebecca Wellmam

Pear prosciutto Roquefort melt with salad and tahini dressing

Sweet, soothing, satisfying: these words describe the experience of sipping tea and enjoying toasted sandwiches at Venus Sophia Tea Room. This light and airy space right in the heart of Chinatown has a feminine charm with its rose petals on the pavement as you enter, floral sofas, and mismatched crockery. This kind of décor can seem faux and contrived, but here it's the result of an artistic eye that can see how disparate elements can blend and complement each other. The same discernment goes into the food – it is simple on the surface, but subtle pairings give it a sophistication. The Pear Prosciutto Roquefort Melt is one such example. Curls of salty prosciutto and translucent slices of pear are topped with a drizzle of Roquefort – just enough to pull out the sweetness of the pear, and not so much as to drown out other flavours. This open-face melt is presented on multigrain bread from Wild Fire Bakery – another example of Venus Sophia's focus on quality ingredients. The Apple Chicken Cheddar Melt has the same finely tuned balance. The apple slivers are raw, but warmed, and their crunch counteracts the softness of the cheese and apple. With its more conventional cheddar cheese, this is the dish my six-year-old preferred. Two grilled ciabattas also stood out – the Baked Turkey Cranberry Goat Cheese one was an entertaining pale pink colour, as the cranberries were blended with the goat cheese, and the Hot Tomato Mozzarella was more spirited than its name sounds, as it includes artichoke spread, onion, and mushrooms. All of these sandwiches are $8.25. Teas on offer are too numerous to list, but some flavours are Roman Provence Roiboos and French Lemon Ginger. The staff and the space are very child friendly; our server Asia was quick to draw our attention to the Stawberry Berry tea as a favourite of kids. My daughter Juliana, taking the role of junior food writer very seriously, informed me that it was "gummy-scented," and darn it all if she isn't right. So take your children, and take your girlfriends, for a relaxing lunch or early dinner.

Posh | 102-1063 Fort St., Victoria | 250.382.7074

Posh is playful in a whole other way than Venus Sophia. The feature is sukiyaki, a dish you make yourself at your table. Each table has an embedded hot plate that a cast iron pan goes onto. Your order of sukiyaki means you get an overflowing tray of vegetables (bok choy, enoki mushrooms, pumpkin, zucchini, shitake mushrooms, taro root, and winter melon on the day I went) along with three different kinds of tofu and a fish cake, all on a generous bed of shredded cabbage. That's not all – you then get two trays of pork and two of beef, sliced a diaphanous two millimeters thin. Now here's where you have to listen respectfully to the coaching of your server: you do not dump everything in like a stirfry gone mad. This is in fact a fondue; bubbling in the cast iron pot is a sukiyaki sauce made out of soy sauce and reduced fruits. You put in a few items at a time, converse with your tablemate about love lives or workplace dramas, and then extract your taro or beef, along with a scoop of the cabbage that lines the bottom of the pan. Two little pitchers are provided for you to top up the water or sukiyaki sauce in your pan as needed. Fun. Though this is plenty,



Rebecca Wellmam

At Posh: Sukiyaki Premium - Served with Alberta A beef and pork shoulder.

plenty, plenty of food, you may want to also try the Passion Fruit Mayo Prawns from the tapas menu for $9.98. This dish is pleasantly sweet, with its tempura prawns atop juicy fried pineapple and apple, and topped with a garnish of crunchy shredded fried yam – delicious. New to Victoria, but a mainstay in Vancouver, Posh is right now offering up various enticements to get Victorians to learn about their concept, so go soon while some of these specials are being dangled to bring you in. The sukiyaki lunch is $18.98 for two, and of course is cheaper for the vegetarian version; lunch bowls right now are $7.98 to $9.98, and for $2.98 more you can get both a sizeable grilled cabbage and tofu salad and a drink – not a pop, but an actual smoothie, mocktail, or special tea. I must say that I found some of the mocktails and elaborate teas veering from sophisticated into the realm of silly, so go with a smoothie, or write to me via the EAT website to let me know which drinks you like.

Cabin 12 | 607 Pandora Ave, Victoria | 250. 590.1500

Cabin 12 has been in the news lately for its backstory: owner Corey Judd arranged his financing for this new restaurant through a group on Facebook, oh brave new world, and when vandals broke the windows of the newborn business, community members and fans pitched in to pay the bill. The story is powerful, and understandable because Cabin 12 is becoming more and more of a community gathering place – who wouldn't feel comfortable at a place with a mini fooseball table nailed to the wall and a book exchange table? The community centre feel is increased, but not enhanced, by some battered chairs and tables, some of which I'd like to see leveled for greater comfort. But what about the food? My favourite dish at this all-day breakfast joint is Tina's Toast for $8.95. French toast is made using sourdough bread from Irene's Bakery. It is then cut into triangle wedges and slathered with caramelized apples. This sauce has a lovely consistency: it oozes in a good way. The apples are slightly tart, adding a tasty counterpoint to the sweetness of the caramel. On the more savoury side, my top pick was the Shambala Eggs Benedict for $9.95. I ordered it with a slightly raised eyebrow, since it has feta, which I feared would overpower the hollandaise, but Cabin 12 makes it work: the Shambala features the requisite English muffin, barely wilted spinach, sundried tomatoes, and a freshly whisked hollandaise with just a sprinkling of feta – well balanced. This is laidback food at laidback restaurant.



At Cabin 12: Tina's Toast, kitchen manager George Olteanu

Gen Laplante

TINA FRASER-BAYNES

Growing community, inspiring change, one market at a time.

As I thumb through the Thomas McNamee biography of Chez Panisse's Alice Waters, recently loaned to me by Tina Fraser-Baynes, I'm struck by a highlighted passage in the well-worn book:



Sherri Kostian

Tina Fraser-Baynes in her Saanich greenhouse.

"Alice Waters has transformed the way many Americans eat and the way they think about food ... Her conception of a moral community based on good food and goodwill has helped to spawn a new generation of artisans and farmers ... committed to stewardship of the land and waters ... [who] settle for nothing less than the highest quality in what they produce."

That this passage is marked comes as no surprise to me. Tina Fraser-Baynes cherishes the same values as Waters and she has played as significant, albeit much less public, a role in inspiring a revolution in the way we think of and access food on Vancouver Island. For more than 20 years, this sixth-generation farmer has been instrumental in creating opportunities for Island growers to produce and sell their products to an expanding audience of people demanding access to food grown close to home. Farmer, educator, advocate, community leader, mentor—Fraser-Baynes is all this and more. Her dedication and passion have helped make Vancouver Island one of Canada's most vibrant and knowledgeable local food communities.

If the Ontario native (who grew up helping her father grow cucumbers for Bick's) had kicked off her gumboots 18+ years ago after co-founding the Moss Street Market, she would have already left a lasting mark on the Victoria food scene. But Moss Street has been only part of a long resumé, all accomplished while running her own organic farm—in itself, more than a full-time job. In the years since, she has co-founded SIOPA (South Island Organic Producers Association) and is now the Vancouver Island chapter chair of Canadian Organic Growers (COG). She was instrumental in starting and managing Haliburton Organic Farm and somehow still finds time to teach at Camosun College and throughout the community. Many young farmers owe a debt of gratitude to her wisdom and generosity.

Fraser-Baynes is well-versed in the issues of food security and industrial agriculture, but she strongly believes people's attitudes will change through the joy of food, not through fear or guilt. "People are looking for pleasure," she says, and she knows that comes through growing, tasting and connecting over real food.

Her latest project is growing the North Saanich Farm Market, launched in 2008. The goal: to increase the amount of food grown in North Saanich and access to it by residents. This market, located at St. John's United Church, 10990 W. Saanich Rd., is about as local and community-focused as it gets. Forget 100-mile; the vendors here all hail from the small municipality 16 km north of Victoria. "It's a bit like a barber shop," she says with a grin. "People just hang out. It's a feel-good spot. We even have a community table so people can bring backyard produce to sell."

Despite the proliferation of markets in the CRD, it seems this community is hungry for more. This year, the North Saanich Farm Market ran virtually year-round, holding a winter market on the second Saturday of every month in addition to weekly summer markets. "Really what I've done all along is to re-create the sense of community for myself," says Fraser-Baynes. And in doing so, she has helped transform the way we think about our farmers, our artisans, our food and their importance to our community.

Try this at home: Sous-vide, a mainstay of restaurant kitchens for years, goes DIY.

COOKING UNDER PRESSURE

— by **Sandra McKenzie**



Tracey Kusiewicz

In the foreground, salmon is about to be vacuum-packed in preparation for immersion in a water bath. In the background is the Poly-science thermal circulator that will keep the water temperature consistent while the fish is poached gently.

It began, as so much does, with an egg. And not just any egg. It was, Peter, my husband and gourmand extraordinaire, declared, the finest egg he had ever tasted, with a silky, moist white surrounding a perfectly formed orb of custard-like yolk. This minor miracle, poached in a water bath held at a precise temperature of 63°C for an hour or more, owed more to the laws of physics than to the culinary wizardry of chef David Hawksworth, (who is soon to open his eponymous restaurant at the Hotel Georgia) who prepared the egg as part of a demonstration of sous-vide cookery at Barbara Jo's Books to Cooks.

No longer considered revolutionary, sous vide (the term means "under vacuum"), has been a mainstay of high-end restaurant kitchens for nearly two decades now. The method, originally developed in Europe for the catering industry, involves gently poaching food that has been vacuum-sealed. This has several advantages for commercial food preparation: it's hygienic, energy-efficient and produces standardized results impossible to achieve with any other cooking method. Once sealed and cooked, then cooled rapidly, the food can be refrigerated or frozen, then reheated in its bag for serving with little or no deterioration in quality. Because the food is never in direct contact with water, there is no leaching of flavours or nutrients. The vacuum packing, coupled with long, slow cooking, reduces shrinkage, tenderizes meats and intensifies flavours. Food is cooked to a specific internal temperature, then held there, so the risk of overcooking is minimal (though not quite impossible, according to Thomas Keller, restaurateur and author of *Under Pressure: Cooking Sous Vide*). What sous-vide cooking can do for tougher, less expensive cuts of meat is a revelation—beef short ribs, for instance, cooked at 56°C for 24 hours, melt into tender, flavourful, medium-rare perfection.

So sous vide is here to stay, at least in restaurant kitchens. How about at home? Is there a purely domestic life in this beast's future? Peter thinks so. Beyond the perfectly prepared egg, chef Hawksworth also produced beef that was rare throughout, with no overcooked bits at either end, and salmon with the taste and texture of sashimi-grade seafood. Peter was convinced enough to invest in the necessary equipment.

That equipment does not come cheap. My husband is a perfectionist, so only the professional-quality stuff would do – specifically, a VacMaster vacuum chamber sealing unit, a Poly Science thermal circulator, guaranteed accurate to within a half-degree, and a Comark temperature probe, which added up to about the cost of a mid-price Alaskan cruise for two. But there are less-expensive set-ups, and DIY solutions abound. We'll get to those later.

As the primary cook in our household, Peter uses the sous-vide equipment several times a week, mostly in preparing seafood. The quality of the final product is unsurpassed, he claims, as is the ability to do more with less. For example, a conventional recipe for salmon confit, found at Epicurious, calls for four cups of light olive oil for six fillets. Peter achieves similar results using a tablespoon of olive oil per fillet. Sablefish poached gently at 60°C comes out sublimely silky and unctuous, with a finish that would not disgrace a fine seafood restaurant. Prawns are firm yet tender and delectable, because sealing them under pressure keeps the muscles from contracting and toughening. Root vegetables like carrots and beets retain their vivid colours and crunchy texture, with tastes intense enough that butter or other flavourings are superfluous.

There is a learning curve in cooking sous vide. Meats, for instance, are an off-putting grey and need to be seared in a hot pan or with a blow torch for an appetizing brown crust. Green vegetables, such as broccoli, don't take well to the method at all. Because sous vide intensifies flavours, garlic can be bitter and overpowering—this is one of the few times when garlic powder is the better choice. Extra-virgin olive oil, if cooked for a long time, imparts an unpleasant, metallic taste.

More critical are the food safety issues. While vacuum packing creates an anaerobic environment that impedes the growth of some pathogens, other organisms, most notably botulism, thrive in the oxygen-depleted conditions. For that reason, foods must be fresh and kept cool, then cooked immediately after sealing. The water temperature must be consistent throughout the process.

Because sous-vide cooking keeps foods in the danger zone (estimated at 5° to 60°C by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency), sometimes for several hours, food should be served as soon as possible after cooking. Botulism spores are still present even after cooking and can germinate during storage. Food that will be stored must be cooled quickly to bring the internal temperature down to 3°C within 90 minutes after cooking. Thomas Keller recommends plunging the food into an ice bath that is mostly ice, replenished as needed.

For those who are intrigued, but not yet prepared to invest in professional-grade equipment, there are some alternatives. The Sous Vide Supreme, developed by Drs. Michael and Mary Dan Eades, and introduced to the North American market last fall by Michelin-starred chef Heston Blumenthal, is the first commercially available system designed for home use. At about U.S.$450, plus the cost of a vacuum sealing system (not included) it is not cheap, but it is considerably cheaper than professional rigs and is, according to reviews in the *New York Times* and other sources, more than adequate for most purposes. The system is available through Sur La Table in the U.S.

There is no shortage of inventive DIY water baths, as a quick Google search will demonstrate. An inexpensive FoodSaver vacuum sealer system serves perfectly well for that part of the process. In a pinch, you can even use a Ziploc bag and a straw, provided the bag is food grade. Be warned, though – if the bag leaks, you will likely be underwhelmed by the end results and have a mess to clean up afterwards. Beyond that, you can improvise with a slow cooker or rice cooker, a high-quality digital thermometer and a keen eye for maintaining your water temperature for the required time. Personally, I'm too pathogen-phobic to try any of the jury-rigged methods on anything more susceptible than carrots, but the Web abounds with tales of those who have tried and survived.

So far, there is a dearth of cookbooks covering sous vide for the home cook, and what is available is expensive. Thomas Keller's is $75 and while it contains valuable, practical advice, the recipes tend to be somewhat esoteric. Sous-Vide Cuisine by Joan Roca and Salvador Burgués is the acknowledged bible of the technique, but it's difficult to track down and will set you back almost $300. Fortunately, the Internet has a wealth of resources free for the searching. Mathematician Douglas Baldwin's *Practical Guide to Sous Vide Cooking* (*amath.colorado.edu/~baldwind/sous-vide.html*) is authoritative, comprehensive and reader-friendly. Egullet has an extensive and on-going discussion dedicated to sous vide (*forums.egullet.org/index.php?/topic/116617-sous-vide-recipes-techniques-equipment*), with some very knowledgeable participants who have probably already answered any conceivable question you may have.

Given the prep time, length of cooking and safety precautions involved, sous vide probably won't replace the microwave oven in the hearts and schedules of busy parents who just want to get a decent meal on the table as painlessly as possible. But neither is it just another flash in the pan. For adventurous home chefs who want to replicate restaurant-quality dishes, or find other, possibly better ways to prepare old favourites, sous vide opens up fresh new avenues of discovery.



At about U.S. $449.00 **The SousVide Supreme** is considerably cheaper than professional rigs and is more than adequate for most purposes. Order from their website and they will deliver anywhere in Canada. *www.sousvidesupreme.com*

LES ILES DE LA MADELEINE

Why is Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine one of our country's best culinary treasures?

Story by **Julie Pegg**
Photography by **Gary Hynes**



A *La Canadienne* cow grazes contently on oceanside wild grasses. Its milk is used to make the renowned Fromagerie du Pied-de-Vent cheeses.



Proudly Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine



Bistro du Bout du Monde owners Luc and Genevieve Jomphe



Scallops and strawberries on the half shell at Bistro du Bout du Monde



Fresh mackerel dish at Bistro du Bout du Monde



Le Vieux Couvent chef Évangéline Gaudet with a bowl of her popular *Les Moules* (mussels).



Picking sweet wild strawberries among the sand dunes



Fromagerie du Pied-de-Vent cheesemaker Stéphane Chiasson



Passing down the finished smoked herring at Fumoir d'Antan



The snow crab catch on Grande-Entrée



Tradititional Lobster Pot-en-Pot.
For a step-by-step recipe
visit *www.eatmagazine.ca/magdalen*



Butcher Rejean Vigneau displays his seal charcuterie



Le Veau des Nathael veal sandwich at Maison d'Eva Anne

It's early evening as the *MV Madeleine* pulls in to dock. Mist tumbles onto shore, bringing with it the sharp whiff of seawater. The five-hour bumpy ferry ride from PEI and the salt tang have whetted our appetites for a good meal and for beginning our culinary quest of Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine (the Magdalen Islands in English). Part of the province of Quebec, this remote archipelago in the Gulf of St. Lawrence is a 65-kilometre-long island chain carved from fiery red sandstone, pummelled by the sea and rough weather and strung together by powdery sand dunes. Colourful, painted houses dot the wind-whipped landscape, giving the place a happy look, even on the bleakest days. The ***Madelinots*** who inhabit them are just about the most hardworking, accommodating folk you'll ever meet. And visiting Les Îles (as I have come to call these beautiful islands) is a food lover's retreat—no big-box stores, no corporate fast-food joints—just pristine landscape and honest, naturally grown, raised or harvested foods cooked with style and sensitivity to the local products.

The Arrival

My husband, Steve, and I head for our lodgings and the dining room of **Le Vieux Couvent**, a handsome old convent-turned-cozy-inn to slurp just-caught, plump blue mussels served three ways—classic Provençale (with tomatoes and garlic), bathed in light but rich lobster sauce, and served under a creamy cloak of Pied-de-Vent cheese from the nearby fromagerie of the same name. And then there's the seduction burger, a fist-thick veal and lobster construction, and to wash it down a blessedly good brew from the local L'abri de Tempête brewery. After loosening the belt several notches, and knackered from our three-thousand-mile trek plus boat ride, we bunk down early to rattling window casings and crashing surf—and sleep like logs.

The morning dawns clear and calm. It's barely 5:30 but we're refreshed and ready for the day's adventures. The Madelinots and their products form a tapestry and I'm keen to discover its tight weave. Over the next few days we tour the islands, visit producers, eat in both fine dining rooms and simple eateries, often braking to admire the endless ocean views, always hungry for whatever taste treat lies around the next bend. First up: an artisanal fromagerie that makes a cheese sought out by some of North America's finest food shops.

Pied-de-Vent

My feet shuffle through sweet smelling hay in the barn behind the tiny **Fromagerie du Pied-de-Vent**. A gentle soul of few words is milking the small black La Canadienne cows that are protected by the *Slow Food Ark of Taste*. They chomp away to Acadian tunes that filter in from somewhere within the barn's walls. Farm owner Jérémie Arseneau arrives. Attuning to his rapid Acadian dialect with its trilled r's, I find out he introduced the small hardy Quebecois breed to the Magdalens for its superb milk-producing qualities. The milk yields high butterfat and protein, excellent for cheese making. And the cows' eco-friendly grazing habits do less damage to fields than those of larger breeds, which can harm spring and fall's waterlogged grasses.

By eight a.m. the milking is done. The cows file out from the barn, past the tiny yellow fromagerie, and across the road to a small meadow where they spend a lazy day grazing on the cliff's saline grasses before evening milking. Jolted into full consciousness by caffeine and salt air, I trot from barn to fromagerie to see how cheesemaker Stéphane Chiasson will turn whole, raw cow's milk (a blend of morning and evening milk) into the creamy washed-rind Pied-de-Vent cheeses. First I sample the milk. Extremely rich, it tastes of clover and grass.

Garbed in white lab coat, hairnet and white rubber boots (and told I must remove my watch, earrings and wedding ring), I witness the entire impeccable procedure. Milk is gravity-fed from barn to vat, then curdled and stirred until the curds are the size of peas. The curds are then poured into cheesecloth-lined moulds, weighted down, then sent to the cooler for a 60-day rest. Around mid-day Jeremie's wife, Lucie, who runs the cheese shop rewards my perseverance with a generous wedge of Pied-de-Vent and a chunk of La Tomme des Desmoiselles, a firm, six-month-aged cheese. The first tastes subtly of nuts and damp earth, while the latter has a sweet-grass nose and fruity flavour. I savour the cheeses' unique terroir as I would a fine French wine.

The Weave

As Chiasson carefully separates curds from whey and gauges temperature, he mentions that the male calves of the dairy cows become the highly regarded **Le Veau** (Veal) **des Nathael**. Nathael is also an Arseneau, one of the original Les Îles families. Chiasson also tells me he washes the rind of Pied-de-Vent with spent grain from the local microbrewery, **L'abri de la Tempête**, whose brewmaster, André La Flamme, malts the beer from local grains. As well, several of the beers are flavoured with island herbs and flowers. The "Corps Mort" (Dead Bodies) gets its unusual smoky character from grain stored at **Fumoir d'Atan**, the local smokehouse.

A Dinner at the End of the World

Later that day we dine at the **Bistro du Bout du Monde** (at the southern tip of the island chain), where more than brilliant cooking is at work. The restaurant is the holy grail of island cuisine. Chef Luc Jomphe and wife Genevieve have forged a tight bond with local producers to bring to the table a cuisine that is creative, yet fresh and natural. The sandwich board menu is short and very sweet. Jomphe braises Nathael veal cheeks into melting submission; grills local lobster, the king of crustaceans, to a buttery crunch; and sears sea scallops to sweet caramelized perfection. For me, however, the star performer is the meaty, firm, just-plucked-from-the-sea mackerel sitting atop a bed of pencil-thin haricots verts and sliced fingerling spuds. Chef Jomphe, who has no qualms about cooking seal, a traditional food of Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine, sears the marine-flavoured meat medium-rare as he might a duck breast and serves it with a cocoa sauce. From the looks of things, diners have no qualms about ordering seal either. Because berries are not yet in season, we forgive them for the wonderful spike of citrus in a lemon tart.

The Weave

Rejean Vigneau of **Boucherie Côte à Côte** supplies local inhabitants, tourists and most Quebec restaurants with seal—as sausages, filet or in terrines studded with fruit, in particular local cranberries. I begin to tread lightly on the topic of catching and eating seal, but Vigneau's tone brings my attempt to a sharp halt. "It is a big part of our culture." I get a first-hand crack at working with seal meat in the butcher shop. He hands me a hunk of dark flesh and a well-honed knife. The meat smells fresh and pleasantly of the sea. It cuts like butter, after which it is seasoned, "berried" and fashioned into terrines. Vigneau whisks the mixture away to put into moulds and fishes from the cooler a terrine ready for slicing, wrapping and selling. As with Le Fromagerie de Pied-du-Vent, the place is spotless, the procedure impeccable. Not until after apron and cap come off and I am out of the preparation area am I treated to a taste of terrine. I'm surprised (and feel a wee pang of guilt) at how much I like the sweet/tart and savoury flavours of the gamey meat.

According to the Season

The sea and the seasons are bred in the Madelinot bone. And islanders pay heed to their rhythms. Come March the seals return to the ice flows for calving, a sign that winter is on its way out. Herring augurs spring's giddy season. As soon as the ice melts, it's time for snow crab. In July, folks flock to wild strawberry patches, for eating on the spot and to gather for jams and jellies. It's time, too, for fishing the beautiful silver-blue mackerel that reflects glints of sunlight beneath the ocean's surface. Autumn means mushroom foraging and cranberry picking. But from early May to July, it is lobster that sets the island's most famous tone. Tourist and local alike flock to shop and ship for the coveted crustacean.

It's another early eye-opener. I've been invited to go out on a lobster boat (a rare privilege) on the Tyran D'eau with lobster fishermen. François (no last name given) and his brother join the 4 a.m. procession of 300-plus lobster boats that sails past the illuminated hillside cross keeping watch over the fishermen. It is a moving experience. These are men of the salt and very few words. Their entire focus is on locating allotted banks, hoisting the stone-bottomed wooden traps up and overboard, hauling in their catch and calibrating each lobster. The repetitive routine requires a strong back and a sharp eye. No wonder François' shoulders are nearly as broad as he is tall. That day the two brothers must toss back more lobsters than they keep. It is toward the end of the season and most have been too small. They say little to each other and less to me other than a couple of twinkle-eyed *bon mots* for the landlubber who's managing the choppy waters with homemade cookies made by François's wife instead of Gravol. François allows me to take the wheel as he swiftly downs a packed lunch—but his blue-eyed gaze doesn't shift away from me for one second. There is no room for error. Lobster season is short and the fishermen's livelihood runs with it.

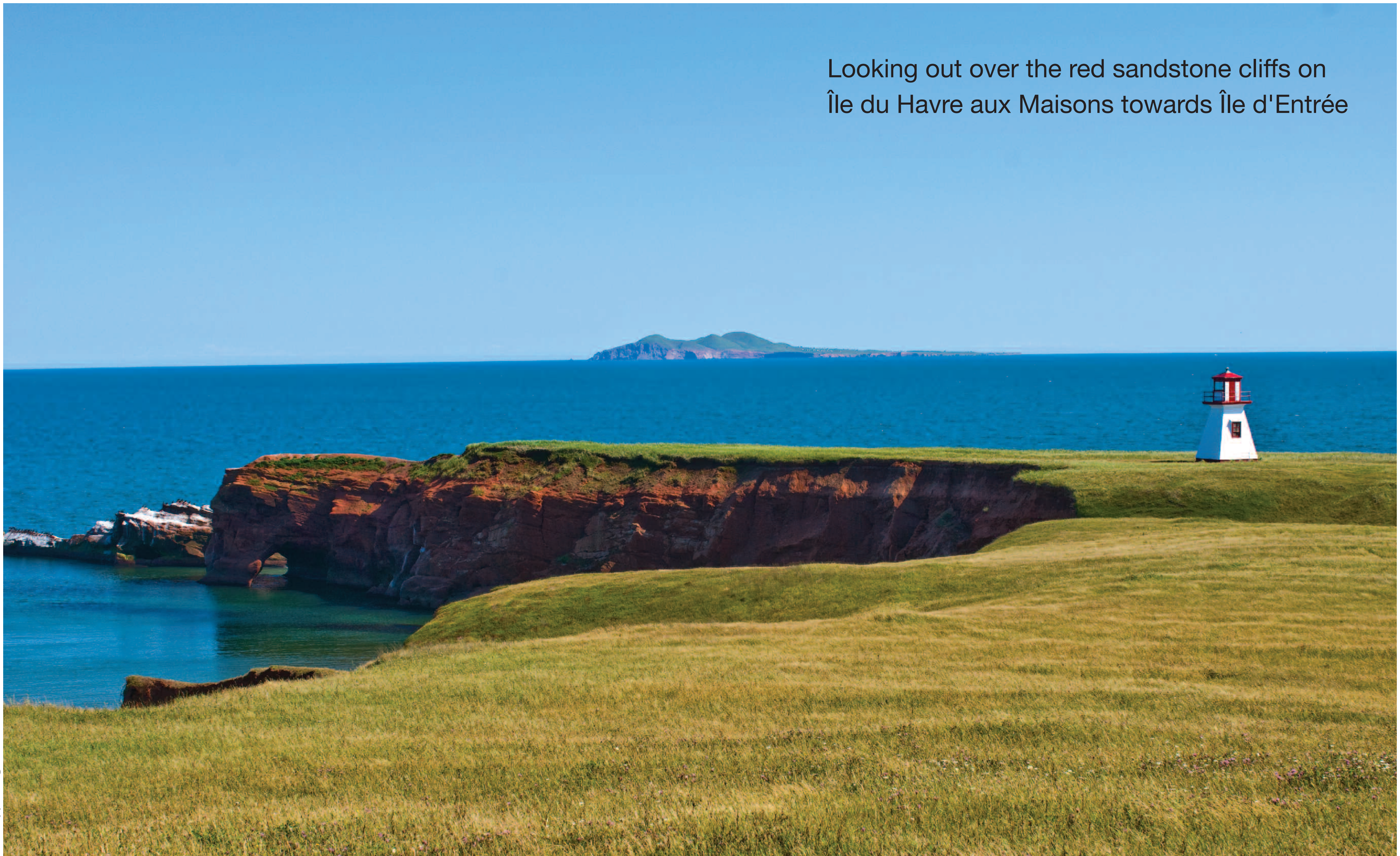
Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine lobsters protect themselves from icy waters with their hard-as-nails shells, which in turn protect the super-succulent flesh. CONT'D ON THE NEXT PAGE

Is there a better way to tackle a couple of these simply boiled hard bodies than to crack them like walnuts, dip the sweet meat into drawn butter and wash the lot down with a pitcher of L'Écume suds from L'abri de Tempête? I doubt it. Locals queue up at the cafeteria-style **La Facterie** to do just that.

Au Revoir

On our ramblings we also tuck into simple homey fare: creamy chowder packed solid with razor clams at the family-friendly **La Maisonnee** restaurant; Nathael veal on a bun at **Maison d' Eva-Anne**, a handsome house-cum-café; and poutine and beer to some toe-tapping Acadian fiddles over at the local bar. The most popular casual fare is the famous **Decker Boy** *fruits de mer pizza*, which is an entire ocean-to-crust concoction, smothered in scallops, clams, mussels and bound together by béchamel sauce, and, you guessed it, Pied-de-Vent cheese.

It's truly a wonder how the proud, enterprising Madelinots have turned a northern Atlantic climate and minimalist terrain into a haven of local gastronomy. My visit to Les Îles has been one of the greatest culinary weeks of my life and I am sad to bid adieu to such friendly folk. The morning we leave, rain and a swelling tide demand hot coffee and possibly Gravol. (Where are the homemade cookies when you need them?) As we sail back to PEI, I am making plans to return.



Looking out over the red sandstone cliffs on Île du Havre aux Maisons towards Île d'Entrée

Gary Hynes



Restaurant Auberge La Petite Baie



Les Iles has one of the largest lobster fleets on the east coast.



Rhubarb pie at Le Salon de thé Le Flâneur



"Le Barbocheux" an artisanal winery.

Les Îles de la Madeleine Essentials

Where are they? The archipelago is in the middle of the Gulf of St. Lawrence, 215 km from the Gaspé peninsula, 105 km from Prince Edward Island and 95 km from Cape Breton Island.

Time Zone One hour ahead of Montreal time.

Getting there By ferry: CTMA from Souris, Prince Edward Island to Caps-Aux-Meules.

Cycling the islands is popular. Foot passengers may wish to bring or rent bikes. Weekly ferry-cruise between Montreal, Gaspésie and Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine. Phone: 1-888-986-3278; fax: 418-986-5101; email: info@ctma.ca, www.ctma.ca.

Air Canada Jazz offers daily flights from Gaspé, Québec City and Montreal with connections for all Air Canada, Canadian and Star Alliance destinations. 1-888-247-2262, www.aircanada.com.

Our lodgings: Le Domaine de Vieux Couvent, 418-969-2233; fax: 418-969-4693, www.domaineduvieuxcouvent.com. The charming proprietor Reginald Poirot speaks English and bends over backwards to help with eating and drinking up Les Îles.

La Butte Ronde B & B (a renovated old schoolhouse run by Ghislain Boudreau and his gracious partner Guy. Ghislain Boudreau speaks English. (See sidebar for Guy's recipe for the traditional Les Îles dish pot-en-pot); 418-969-2047 or 1-866-969-2047, www.labutteronde.com.


A room at La Butte Ronde B & B

Dining
Domaine du Vieux Couvent.
Le Refectoire (details above)
Bistro du Bout du Monde
418 937-2000 (seasonal)

Beer
L'abri de la Tempête microbrasserie
418-986-5005
www.alabridelatempete.com

Cheese
Fromagerie du Pied-de-Vent
Phone: 418-969-9292
Fax: 418-969-9307
No website

Smoked Herring and Mackerel
Fumoir d'antan - Économusée du fumage de poisson
Phone: 418-969-4907
Fax: 418-969-4909
www.fumoirdantan.com

Seal
Boucherie spécialisée Côte à Côte
Phone: 418-986-3322
Fax: 418-986-5745
No website

Lobster
Les Pêcheries Gros-Cap
418-986-2710
Fish processing plant, seafood shop and "La Factrie," a cafeteria-style restaurant serving whole, fresh boiled lobster.

Finding Out More
Tourism Magdalen Island and Quebec Tourism are excellent websites and give detailed information on food, lodging, and discovering the islands.
Visit www.Tourismeilesdelamadeleine.com and www.bonjourquebec.com

An ambitious class delivers a wealth of tips and techniques, as well as a feast

Something about watching Heidi Fink before her class starts reminds me of a hockey player getting in the zone as the national anthem is playing. There is a slight sway, and as she surveys the countertop in front of her, you can tell she is mapping out her game plan. Once the class begins she is on, leaving no seed or spice left unturned. Every element of cooking that comes up in the course of the class is explained in detail.

I've come to the *Thrifty Foods Cooking and Lifestyle Centre* for Heidi's Authentic Indian Cuisine III class. It is one of several cooking schools that Heidi teaches at (*French Mint*, *Fairfield Community Place*, *Terralicious*) and based on the brief introductions of my fellow classmates, she obviously has a following. On the menu tonight: Butter Chicken, Mumbai Spiced Vegetables, Classic Saffron Pulao, Naan Bread, Chopped Onion and Tomato Relish and Green Almond Chutney. As I flip through the generous handout students received at the start of the class, I wonder how this Red Seal Chef, cooking instructor, food writer and recent guest chef on a reality television series (*XWeighted*), is going to manage to demonstrate each of these recipes, and feed us in a mere three hours. I would need a full day, at least, to get through this menu. But this chef clearly has both cooking and teaching (simultaneously) down to a fine art.

Heidi begins by explaining that Butter Chicken is traditionally prepared by using up leftover tandoori chicken. We are directed to the page of our handout that holds the recipe for Tandoori chicken, and offered samples of some that has been marinating all day, and just been cooked up for us to try.

Flipping back and forth through the handout, we watch as the chef gets started on the spiced vegetables and rice pulao, passing around the black mustard seeds for us to look at, or explaining what the Asafoetida spice is made from as she goes. It is clear why she states in her course calendar that Indian Cuisine I is a prerequisite for this class. This is not the place for beginner cooks. Although even the more basic techniques are demonstrated, you will gain more from this advanced class if you have already attained a certain comfort level with culinary multitasking; an ability to hop from dish to dish without loosing track of what is in each pot, and what stage each dish is at, is necessary to keep up with Heidi's instruction.

Heidi's creativity and determination to achieve an optimal taste experience from each dish has paid off. Every part of the meal is cooked to perfection; each flavour stands strong, yet the ingredients remain fresh and crisp – the chicken is tender and moist, and not a single mushy vegetable can be found. With my handout full of recipes and a complete list of all the local places to find all the necessary Indian ingredients I am inspired to recreate this feast at home. However, lacking two kitchen assistants of my own, I may just keep it simple, upgrading my cupboard basmati to Heidi's recommended brand (Lal Qilla), and cooking up a curry using the technique that she guarantees will "make the flavours bloom, and transform your curries". Having tasted the results, I trust her completely. Here's my advice: don't wait for the *Food Network* to catch on… take her classes in person while you can.

For more Thrifty Foods Cooking & Lifestyle classes visit: www.thriftyfoods.com and for Heidi's schedule: www.chefheidifink.com

luscious early summer

Recipes and food styling by **JENNIFER DANTER**
Photography by **MICAHEL TOURIGNY**



Herbalicious Stuffed Chicken Legs



Pretty Pink Panna Cotta

Wine Pairing Suggestions

Spot Prawn Salad

1. Northern Rhone viognier or Roussanne/Marsanne blend– more cool, crisp, herbal and subtle mineral flavours, bright acid
2. Steen (aka Chenin Blanc) from S. Africa – fresh, fruity apple and melon with spicy crisp acidity

Stuffed Roast Chicken Legs

1. Cotes du Rhone Red – earthy, rustic red from France – pepper, blackcurrant notes
2. Oregon Pinot Noir – earthy, herbal, wild cherry flavours

Strawberry Panna Cotta

1. Italian Brachetto d'acqui (like Banfi's Rosa Regale). Pink, off dry frizzante (slightly sparkling)with strawberry, raspberry flavours
2. Fresita – a Chilean sparkling dessert wine infused with strawberries – quite sweet.

—By Treve Ring



SPOT PRAWN, GREEN BEAN & WILD AND FARMED MIXED GREEN SALAD

While there are countless ways to eat spot prawns, a quick steam, then tossed with an assortment of mixed greens is one of my favourite ways to enjoy them. *Serves 6*

1 bunch fresh dill
3 Tbsp vinegar
1 green onion, sliced
1 tsp Babe's honey (*or other BC produced honey*)
1/2 cup olive oil
Sea salt and black pepper, to taste
8 cups fresh salad greens (*buy a good quality spring mix at a farmer's market*)
1 lb cooked spot prawns (*caught in BC waters the brief season runs from May - June 15th)*
1/2 lb cooked green beans, split lengthwise
2 radishes, thinly sliced
24 yellow Campari tomatoes, halved (*Sun Wing grows the best hothouse tomatoes*)

Chop 3 Tbsp fresh dill. Place in a blender and add vinegar, green onion, honey and 1 Tbsp hot water. Pulse to blend, then slowly pulse in oil until emulsified. Taste and season with salt and pepper.

Place salad greens in a bowl and add prawns, beans, radishes and a handful of coarsely chopped dill. Drizzle with some of the dressing and toss to mix.

A luscious early summer supper

With early summer vegetables popping up at markets it's time for lighter and airier fare. Delicate spot prawns are in season and make a wonderful starter to a glorious chicken feast. Yes, chicken. Too often overlooked, chicken legs make a comeback stuffed with herby sausage and a crunchy rosemary coating. And those lovely, little local strawberries are finally here. Blended into silky panna cotta, they're irresistible.

HERBALICIOUS STUFFED CHICKEN LEGS

Hidden away under the skin, a bread and sausage stuffing adds wonderful flavour and helps keep the meat moist. Make it spicy or super savoury - peruse the butcher case and choose an interesting sausage. Buy a big loaf of sourdough bread and use half for the stuffing then turn the rest into bread crumbs for the coating! *Serves 6*

3 heaping Tbsp butter
2 sausages, meat squeezed from casings (try Galloping Goose, Oyama or Choux Choux)
1 onion, chopped
1 celery, chopped
2 cups small bread cubes (day old works best)
6 chicken legs (*the best chickens are from the Cowichan Valley or Polderside in Vancouver*)
Sea salt and ground black pepper, to taste
3 cups fresh bread crumbs
3 Tbsp chopped fresh rosemary
1/3 cup all-purpose flour
2 eggs, lightly beaten (*free range or organic are best*)
Olive oil

Melt butter in a large frying pan over medium heat. Add sausage meat, onion and celery. Sauté until meat is cooked and veg is soft, 5 to 8 minutes. Remove from heat and stir in bread. Cool completely.

Loosen skin of each chicken leg. Tuck stuffing under skin, then fasten with toothpicks, if necessary. Season legs with pinches of salt and pepper.

Stir fresh bread crumbs with rosemary. Coat each leg with flour, then egg, then a final layer of rosemary bread crumbs. Place on baking sheet . For a crisp coating, spray with olive oil.

Bake in preheated 400F oven for 20 minutes, then reduce heat to 375F and bake until deep golden and cooked through, about 25 more minutes.

HOW TO MAKE FRESH BREAD CRUMBS Start with day old bread (or toast it first). Trim crusts, then tear bread into small pieces. Whirl in a food processor until crumbs form.

PRETTY PINK PANNA COTTA

A blush of pale pink and mild berry complements this silky number. I prefer panna cotta slightly softer than usual – more towards a pudding spooned out of a bowl. *Serves 6*

2 cups cream (*use organic if possible*)
3 cups chopped strawberries (*local berries are always sweeter and more flavourful*)
1/2 cup granulated sugar
1 envelope gelatine (about 2 tsp)
1/4 cup milk

Stir cream with strawberries and sugar. Gently heat, stirring occasionally, until sugar is completely dissolved. Don't boil, just heat through. Working in batches, puree in a blender. Strain through a fine mesh sieve (TIP: use a ladle in a circular motion to press out as much liquid as possible) and discard solids.

Sprinkle gelatine over milk and let stand 1 minute to soften, then whisk into warm strawberry mixture until evenly mixed. Pour through sieve again to remove any bits of clumped gelatine.

Pour into small glasses or bowls. Cover and refrigerate until well chilled, at least 3 hours or overnight. Dish up with chopped fresh strawberries and mint.

local strawberies


G. Hynes

Strawberries at Moss St. Market

The sun is shining, the weather is warm and markets are gearing up for the season. As summer approaches, so does the highly anticipated Island strawberry harvest. For many, it's difficult to imagine June and July without the delectable sweetness of Vancouver Island strawberries.

While imported varieties from places like California are available year-round, locals agree that strawberries grown on Vancouver Island are juicier and more flavourful than their American counterparts. The difference is easy to tell when biting into a fresh local strawberry on a hot summer day. In the off season, one remembers the juicy, mouth-watering flavour and begins counting down the days to strawberry season. Not to worry, though – the first berries are just weeks away.

But what makes Island strawberries superior to seemingly similar varieties grown elsewhere? The secret, farmers say, is in the growing conditions. Farmers on the Saanich Peninsula credit the loamy soil (an even concentration of sand, silt and clay), and west-facing slopes that provide generous afternoon sun. Both of these conditions are ideal for strawberry growth. Our temperate climate also ensures that the plant doesn't get too cold in the winter, which slows the growth rate in the spring. Summer temperatures remain relatively cool, which produces a firmer berry. Hot temperatures are often responsible for mushy, sloppy strawberries. Practise also makes perfect – farmers on Vancouver Island have been growing strawberries for decades, allowing them to produce the best product possible.

Local strawberries are generally smaller than imported ones and have a higher sugar content than imported varieties, which are picked for their appearance. This creates the intense flavour that Vancouver Islanders look forward to every summer and one of the reasons why we can't wait to bite into the first bright red berry of the season.

Grown all over the Island but particularly on the Saanich Peninsula, these summer berries are usually available from June to October. After an unseasonably warm spring, however, growers are anticipating the first strawberries to be ready as early as May long weekend this year. In season, local strawberries can be found at markets, farm stands, or at U-Pick locations. Island strawberries are picked at the peak of their ripeness, maximizing flavour and nutritional value while decreasing the time that it takes for the fruit to reach your mouth. Often, local strawberries are sold within hours of picking, which is another factor that contributes to a better tasting product. It's also one of the many reasons why locals say that Vancouver Island strawberries taste more like strawberries than from anywhere else.

Whether purchasing or picking, look for the ripest berries. Unripe strawberries only redden slightly after picked. As well, be sure to eat or freeze Island strawberries quickly. Left on the counter, they will develop mold quickly and won't last much longer in the refrigerator.

The season is limited, so head to the nearest farm or market early to get your share of local strawberries, and eat lavishly. Little compares to the flavour of a fresh Vancouver Island strawberry. — *By Candice Schultz*

cooking with PEAS

For Nathan Fong, peas went from mushy to magnificent, the minute he tasted his first fresh one, straight off the vine.

As a child growing up in the '60s, revolting tins of vegetables were ubiquitous, but the worst was canned peas. The water-logged, grey-green pellets occasionally appeared on our dining room table and were instantly scraped to the side of the plate despite parental scolding for not eating our healthy and nutritious vegetables. What nutrition? Everything had been sucked out of the delicate, innocent pea, and anything that was of healthy value became part of the metallic-smelling brine they sat in.

It wasn't until the late '60s and early '70s, when fresh frozen products advanced onto the freezer shelves, that I actually started to like the small green beads. They almost had colour and real fresh flavour. They were worth eating until I sampled a seasonal fresh pea directly off their delicate vines. I learned how to be patient while shelling them and was amazed at how many pods it took to barely create a handful. I guess in the old days, the only people who fully understood the pleasures of eating fresh peas were those who grew their own. What a pleasure it must have been then, to sit on the porch with the basket of peas, running your thumb down each pod in turn to reveal its moist, shiny innards for the first time ever, then scooping down the line of peas and hearing them rattle into the colander in your lap. Now, as I shell the modest mountain of pods, there are bound to be one or two to eat raw: sweet, crunchy and delicious!



PISELLI ALLA ROMANA

Tracey Kusiewicz

PISELLI ALLA ROMANA

This traditional Italian dish is usually made with prosciutto. I've used Serrano ham as it is usually meatier, has less salt and is less likely to be dry. This recipe can also be made with fresh young fava beans or a mixture of both. *Serves 4.*

3 large shallots, minced
3 Tbsp extra virgin olive oil
4 lbs fresh peas in the pod, about 3 1/2 cups shelled
6 cups shredded romaine lettuce (ribs removed)
2 slices Serrano or prosciutto ham, cut into small dice
1/2 tsp kosher salt
Freshly ground pepper, to taste

WINE PAIRING SUGGESTIONS
- Italian Verdicchio – crisp, lemon, almond flavours
- Chilean Sauv Blanc – green apple, grapefruit, punchy zip

In a large skillet, slowly cook the shallots in the olive oil over very low heat until translucent, 3 to 4 minutes. Increase heat to low; add the peas and cook for 15 minutes, stirring occasionally.

Add the lettuce and ham, cook for 10 minutes. Season with salt and freshly ground pepper. Drizzle with extra-virgin olive oil.

CHORIZO, PEAS AND EGGS

This classic Azorean Portuguese dish makes a simple, quick breakfast as well as a dinner entrée. *Serves 4.*

2 Tbsp olive oil
1 onion, chopped
2 cloves garlic, minced
2 Tbsp pimento sauce (available at Portuguese grocery stores)
1 lb Portuguese chorizo, thinly sliced
3 cups frozen or fresh peas
4 eggs
Sea salt and freshly ground pepper

WINE PAIRING SUGGESTIONS
- Cava – traditional method sparkling from Spain. Fresh mineral, crisp apple – look for Brut (dry)
- BC – fresh and crisp sparkling wine - sunny citrus notes

In a skillet, heat the oil over medium heat; add the onion and garlic and sauté until they start to brown. Add pimento sauce and chorizo; cook for 3 to 4 minutes. Add the peas and cook stirring, until thawed or until completely heated through and tender.

While the mixture is steaming hot, crack the eggs on top. Season. Cover and cook until the yolks are to desired hardness, about 5 minutes.

SWEET PEA RISOTTO (Risi e Bisi)

This is a traditional Venetian dish that showcases fresh sweet peas at their best, smothered in a creamy almost soup-like risotto licked with Parmesan cheese.This dish really shines only when freshly harvested baby peas are available. This classic dish is usually made with a stock prepared from the empty pea pods. As an alternative, cook the pea pods in 8 cups of chicken broth until the pods soften, then strain, discarding the pods. As an addition, stir in half a cup chopped prosciutto before serving. *Makes 6 servings.*

2 lbs fresh peas in a pod (about 2 cups fresh shelled peas)
6 to 7 cups chicken stock
6 Tbsp butter, softened
1/4 cup finely chopped shallots
2 tsp finely chopped garlic
2 cups arborio rice
1/4 cup dry white wine
2/3 cups freshly grated Parmigiano-Reggiano
2 Tbsp finely chopped fresh mint
2 Tbsp finely chopped fresh chives
Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper

WINE PAIRING SUGGESTIONS
- Tocai Friulano from Italy – crisp green apple, floral, citrus notes
- Creamy & zippy round white like Australian Sauvignon Blanc/Semillon

Bring a saucepan of lightly salted water to a boil and set up a bowl of ice water. Add the peas to the boiling water and cook until tender, about 1 to 2 minutes. Drain peas and immediately plunge into ice water; drain and set aside.

Heat chicken stock to a simmer. Add 3 Tbsp butter and melt over medium-high heat in a large sauté pan. Add the shallots and sauté for a few minutes until soft. Add the garlic and sauté for another minute. Add the rice and stir until coated with butter. Add the wine and simmer, stirring, until most of the liquid has evaporated. Add the simmering stock a cup at a time, stirring frequently, continually adding more stock in smaller amounts as the rice comes closer to desired doneness. After about 20 to 25 minutes of cooking, the rice should be al dente stage. Remove from heat and stir in remaining 3 Tbsp butter and the parmesan. Add a quarter to a half cup more stock until you have a soupier and creamier consistency. Add the fresh herbs and peas, season to taste and serve in heated dishes. Serve with a spoon.

FOR MORE OF NATHAN'S PEA RECIPES GO TO: *www.eatmagazine.ca/recipe*

VANCOUVER

Long gone are the days when hotel fine dining was defined more often than not by steam-tabled ingredients served under wallpaper-paste sauces at inflated prices. Some years back **Diva at the Met**, (Metropolitan Hotel) and **Bacchus Restaurant & Lounge** (Wedgwood Hotel) raised Vancouver's bar on restaurant dining with clean, fresh flavours some years back, and perennially garner kudos from Vancouver punters. Four Season's **YEW Restaurant and Bar** recently joined the august duo in *Georgia Straight*'s readers' choice awards. Judging from early days, **Oru** in the new Fairmont Pacific Rim Hotel (1038 Canada Place, Coal Harobur), could very well topple one of the reigning winners when next year's awards roll round. The dining room is a swish airy space. Natural light sifts softly through the floor-to-ceiling windows while from the open kitchen young chefs dole out pan-Asian cuisine for well-dressed types sipping Junmai sake (from an impressive list) or a pisco/ginger sour. As the day darkens, soft lighting offers intimacy and a subtle (and flattering) glow.

As for some fine menu choices, ocean-wise sablefish gets a lively ginger/tomato/miso treatment. Seared Qualicum Bay scallops meet delicate Asian mushrooms and braised piquant daikon radish. Thai red curry with braised duck, and lots of garlic is a menu must try.

The large central fireplace and buttery leather chairs give the Fairmont Pacific Rim's open (and packed) Lobby Lounge an unexpected and welcome intimacy. Folks can sip champagne and savour fresh seafood sushi from the raw bar (or dig into short-rib poutine and suds) over jazzy tunes from the "white" grand Fazioli piano. In spite of the hotel's cool decor, posh nosh and premium potables the prices are surprisingly reasonable. (Lighter fare $9-$20) (Seafood and meat entrees $24-$38). **David Wong**, Canada's at the 2009 Bocuse D'Or culinary competition is executive chef.

North Shore folks no longer must cross a bridge for well-crafted hotel cooking. Recently opened, **Pinnacle at the Pier** (138 Victory Ship Way) just east of Lonsdale Quay boasts a cozy lounge, comfy dining room and good local taste. Lightly fried crab cakes, are super crabby, a pleasant surprise from the boring clichés so often served these days. Spinach salad is understatedly dressed in verjus, dried sour cherries, and walnuts. A splendid chicken clubhouse and beer battered fish and chips keep happy a hearty appetite. (Soups, salads and starters $7-$15, Mains $20-$30)

The new **Relish** (Nelson Square 888 Nelson Street between Howe and Hornby) cuts the mustard with its new slimmed down space, casual-smart atmosphere and focus on good Canadian comfort fare. Chef **Patrick Gallagher** dishes up thick-crusted tourtiere,stuffed with chicken thigh meat, pork and sweetbreads. Duck-confit and arugula salad, gnocchi poutine, trout pate and to-die-for short ribs shpeherd's pie all clock in at under fifteen bucks. Nice touch is the buck-a-shuck oysters (Effingham and Chef's creek on my visit) from 3-6pm. A dozen of those downed with an Imperial Pint of Guinness—20oz. clocks in at around $20 (before taxes).

This place caters to the after work crowd, and folks looking for fun, unpretentious and generous fare-well executed, without breaking the bank. NOTE: The construction "fortress" surrounding the restaurant in the square should come down shortly.

—by Julie Pegg

Nanaimo

Yahoo How about a column where I buzz all about carbs? Carbs to the left of me, carbs up the road from me, and carbs in a valley by the deep blue sea.

Bread & Honey Food Company [#4-162 Harrison Ave., Parksville, Tel: 250-586-1021] is located in a tiny five-shop plaza just off the main drag in Parksville (Is there a main drag in Parksville?) Owners **Val Sorensen** and **Laurie Robertson** both wake-up on their respective farms in the area, raid the hen house and then toodle into their deli with baskets of goodies from their farms. Hello Little Red Riding Hood, you have competition. This French style bistro-deli makes you think picnics in the Loire Valley. Open 6 days a week from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., the menu is a limited "fresh-sheet" concept, but it is certainly not limited in taste or creativity. The atmosphere is convivial with a big plank table in the center for group gatherings. The colours are muted tones of butter and leek. The smells wafting about seduce your appetite into surrender. Although simple, the flavours pounce, in a great part to do with the freshness and skill applied to each dish. The ladies not only bring in from their own farms, but get many other items from local producers. There are two fresh breads made every day and the menu rotates. One day it might be chicken pot pie with hot Vichyssoise, and the next arugula and lemon frittata with leek and bacon soup; always a veggie selection and always a protein. Many of their foods may be taken home for dinner. They have a goodly stock of frozen sausages and savoury pies, all made on site. Even their gourmet coffee comes from a roastery in Courtenay. Think local. Eat local. These two women live it and their bistro exemplifies the philosophy.

If you are driving hill & dale exploring the Cowichan Valley, and you want to "discover" the most picture-perfect spot, at the end of the world, for killer mussels and frites, I know the place. **Genoa Bay Café** [5000 Genoa Bay Road, Unit # 9., Duncan Tel: 250-746-7621] is located at Mile Zero. You cannot go any further along the road or you end up in the drink surrounded by bobbing sail boats. This charming little bistro is on the pier in a romantic-looking weathered clapboard cottage, and hiddey-ho, the food rocks! The chef has a pedigree. Chef **Dave Cartner** hails from Vancouver. He was the chef at popular **Bin 941** and did a longtime run at **Chateau Whistler**. Owners **Gord Rumley** and **Stacey Johnston** work the floor; the service is crisp, fun and informative. The menu is simple but huge on fresh local flavours and the execution is deft, the presentation pleasing to the eye. The place is always packed. The locals have kept this spot to themselves far too long. Not anymore.

If a blond-haired lady whipped into your driveway in a canary yellow budgie of a car, walked up to your front door and handed you fresh bread, would you propose marriage? **Anne Grindl**





NANAIMO CONT'D

of **Cake & Crust Bakery** [1973 Harlequin Cres., Nanoose Bay, Tel: 250-937-7018] will do just that. This is not just any bread. These are breads like caramelized onion & sweet potato, multi-grain & local organic honey or light rye & pumpkin seed. Anne studied baking at **Vancouver Island University**'s culinary arts program, under the tutelage of the head bread dude himself, **Martin Barnett**. All her breads start with a sour-dough mother or they are slow-rise pre-fermenting bread. She does not stop with bread. Anne is a gifted, creative and very talented cake wizard. Her Italian butter cream special occasion cake is the most popular and she makes over 100 of these per year. Sorry to disappoint but Anne's trading/driving area is limited to Parksville, Nanoose Bay and North Nanaimo, but if you have friends in those areas, make them your bread mules.

—by Su Grimmer

Victoria

Spring is now in full bloom, and Victoria's neighbourhoods are seeing new life as well. In the Cook St. Village, a new butcher shop opened in late March; **Island Meat and Seafood** is under the helm of **Steve Walker**, a former butcher at **Thrifty Food's**, certified since 1977. His beautiful selection of fresh and frozen local meats and seafood include Cowichan Valley's **Farmhouse Poultry**, lamb from Metchosin, Island-raised duck, pork from Port Alberni and **Qualicum Bay Scallops**. Steve makes his own sausages, kabobs and jerky as well. Located next to **The Beagle Pub**, it is definitely a welcome addition to the community. March also saw the opening of Victoria's first gluten-free bakery on Pandora. Fans of **Origin Bakery**'s baked goods will be please to hear they now have a walk-in retail location open five days a week. (*www.originbakery.com*)

In Fernwood, **This Little Piggy**...went to Fernwood has a newly acquired liquor license, just in time for the opening of their south-facing Fernwood square patio and with a new spring menu to compliment their beer and wine selections. ...**Fernwood NRG** is proud to announce that it will be hosting the first **Fernwood Bites: Local Fare in an Urban Square** Sunday, June 20th, from 6-9 pm in Fernwood Square. The fundraising event will feature the talents of neighborhood chefs, as well as wine tastings, music and more. Participants include: **Paprika**, **Lucy's in the Square**, **Fernwood Inn**, **Zambri's**, **Hernandez**, **Devour**, **Pig**, **The Parsonage**, **The Little Piggy**, **Stir it up**, **Aubergine**, as well as **Phillips Brewery** and local wineries. Keep an eye on their website (*www.fernwoodnrg.ca*) for updates.In the Burnside / Rock Bay neighborhood, **Pizzeria Prima Strada** owner **Geoffrey Dallas** is working hard to organize a Sunday farmer's market in the parking lot outside the new Bridge Street location. Watch the news section of *www.eatmagazine.ca* for new developments on this project.

In Saanich, the **Glendale Gardens is** holding their annual Spring Plant Sale Saturday May 1st and Sunday May 2nd, from 9am – 4pm. It's a great opportunity to stock up on vegetable starters, including tomatoes and herbs. The Glendale Gardens will also be home to the **6th Annual Organic Island Festival and Sustainability Expo**, taking place Saturday July 10th and Sunday July 11th, from 10am – 5pm. This event is Canada's largest outdoor environmental expo and a chance to learn more about leading edge eco-friendly gardening practices, products and services. (*www.glendalegardens.ca*).... Also in Saanich, **Terralicious** once again has a tempting schedule of courses this May and June, with two Sustainable Seafood classes offered by Chef **Dan Hayes** (*www.thelondonchef.com*), a series of summer garden supper classes with Chef **Laura Moore**, and a series of gourmet supper classes with Chef **Cosmo Meens**. See their full schedule at *www.terralicious.ca*.

The Wild Salmon Circle continues their work educating the public about declining salmon runs. They are organizing a Victoria rally for May 9th. If you would like to get involved, check out their website (*www.wildsalmoncircle.ca*).

The people at **Muse Winery** have come up with an answer to what to do for Mother's Day this year. They are holding a Mother/Daughter A'Musing Afternoon Saturday, May 8th, from 12.30 – 3.30 pm. Enjoy a tasting plate prepared by **Bistro Muse**, paired with a flight of Muse wines before designing your own ceramic masterpiece. Artist **Pauline Olesen** will be on hand to assist. (*www.musewinery.ca*)

The Italian Bakery has informed us that they will be bringing our mobile gelato cart to the ICC **Defending Our Backyard** festival on May 31st. They will be serving local organic strawberry gelato, local hazelnut gelato and vanilla bean gelato with local lavander and lemon zest. The cart is also available for rental @ private parties and corporate events. 3189 Quadra Street, Victoria - (250) 388-4557.

This just in... he Wine Island Vintners Association has announced a a WIVA Wine Tasting at the **Inn at Laurel Point** for Thursday, May 13th. At the time of printing 20 wineries have signed up. The event has two components: a Trade Tasting from 2pm - 4pm and a Public Tasting ($25) from 5pm - 7pm. Check the WIVA website for how to purchase tickets. *www.wineislands.ca*

—by Rebecca Baugniet

WELCOME TO COWICHAN BAY

shop. dine. relax.

cittaslow

Cowichan Bay, a picturesque seaside village a short drive north of Victoria, is emerging as a little culinary oasis on Vancouver Island and quickly becoming known as the gastronomic epi-centre of the Cowichan Valley region.

A vista of ocean, sail and fishing boats, piers, wharves, floating homes, small shops and restaurants greet you as you come down the hill into the village. Most of the action takes place along the main street which runs along the waterfront. Visitors come to stroll the shops and galleries, enjoy a fine meal or simply to grab a snack. But the village is also becoming a hub for searching out and sampling local southern Vancouver Island foods and wines.

If it's seafood you are looking for, the new **Cowichan Bay Seafood** shop is the place to go. Owners Gregg and Anne Best are commercial crab and prawn fishermen and pioneers in sustainable seafood production. Their store features live storage tanks for fresh crab, shellfish and spot prawns in season. A little further along the street two of the village's most iconic shops sit side by side. People come from miles around to pick-up a loaf or two at **True Grain Bread**. This "Olde-World" bakehouse is where the craft of the baker and miller are honed and cherished. Linger a while amidst the aromas of traditional European breads, handcrafted daily from only the essential natural organic ingredients to preserve the flavours and integrity of the true grain. Next door **Hilary's Cheese & Deli** offers visitors a change to relax and savour cheeses produced locally or from further afield. Their lunch counter serves home-made soups paired with sandwiches from the neighbouring bakery. Don't forget to take home some of Hilary's renowned cow and goat's milk artisan cheeses. For 5-star, casually elegant dining, a short stroll will bring you to **The Masthead Restaurant**. Owner/manager Luke Harms has perfected the art of dining well with both the menu and the wine list celebrating local foods and wines from the nearby farms and wineries.

Make Cowichan Bay your base for touring the region. Worth a visit are many neighbouring wineries and farms, quality coffee shops and farmers markets.

For more information on your visit to Cowichan Bay go to www.cowichanbay.com

Fresh Sheet: The weekend of May 15th is an idea time to visit Cowichan Bay and attend the **2nd Annual Spot Prawn Festival**. See page 6 in this issue for details.

THE COMOX VALLEY & NORTH

In the wake of some restaurants closing in the region it's good to see some new resto energy. **TOTO** [formerly Thyme on the Ocean -1832 Comox Ave, Comox 250-941-8686] has new owners **Anna Martin** and husband Chef **Andrew Martin**. Andrew is known for his seafood Friday's at the **Longlands Golf Course** restaurant. AT TOTO's he's prepping foods with a Euro-Mediterranean flavour from local product (including **Courtenay's Blue Moon Winery** and **Nature's Way Farm**, both at 4905 Darcy Road). Reservations recommended for Fridays. Owner **Sonya Friend** says there will be "samples galore" at the **Comox Valley Bakehouse** [2998 Kilpatrick Ave, *www.comoxvalleybakehouse.com*] grand opening event May 8. **Wain Jarvis**'s spicy Jamaican flavours are getting lots of "likes" at the new **Carnival Caribbean Cabana** [4915D Island Highway N at the top of Mission Hill]. Congratulations to **Katherine Kirk – Yummies & Gyros** [279 Puntledge Road, Courtenay 250-338-2299 *www.gyroscafe.com*] just celebrated 10 + 1 years in business this past April!

What's good to eat in our area? Lots, according to my foodie friends on facebook and twitter. Leigh and Carolyn are high on what Chef **Steve Dodd** and co. are doing at **Bisque** [14th and Cliffe Ave., Courtenay 250-334-8564 Tues - Sat). Kathryn likes how **Linda Shaven** and **Viki Champion** have taken the quick breakfast / hot lunch "to a whole new level of delicious with a healthy, colourful and TASTY menu" at **Tarbell's Cafe** [2705 Dunsmuir, 250-336-8863] in Cumberland. "A good word" (or two) for **Zizi Café's** [441B Cliffe Avenue 250-334-1661] Middle Eastern tasties comes from Alison ("awesome salads!") and Jean ("anything!"). As I'm writing I'm feasting on Tandoori sausages (oregano/lamb sausages waiting in the fridge!) from **Brambles Market** [244A 4th Street, Courtenay 250-334-8163 *www.bramblesmarket.ca*]. But Anya tells me the "best sausages [she's] met in the Comox Valley are the bison-cranberry smokies at **Edible Island** [477-6th Street, Courtenay 250-334-3116 *www.edibleisland.ca*], or Tony's handmade selection at **Comox Valley Meats**" [Suite 311130, Centennial Dr. off Back Road, Courtenay 250-338-5900]. Sounds like time for a "sausagefest" Anya! Algy and Jennifer think Chef Marcus is doing a few things right at **Martine's Bistro** [1754 Beaufort Ave, Comox 250-339-1199]: Algy says it's the "best restaurant" in the Comox Valley; Jennifer says they make "the best chocolate mousse [she's] EVER had" (and Leigh and Brian reserve it for their anniversary dinners). Others' bests? Leigh's best dinner recently was at **Avenue Bistro** [2064 Comox Ave, Comox 250-890-9200 *www.avenuebistro.ca*], while Lorraine declares Chef Ronald at **Locals** [364-8th Street, Courtenay 250-338-6493 www.localscomoxvalley.com] "the best Chef on the Island!" Ronald will be just back from his stint as guest chef at **Edible BC**'s Cooking with BC's Best Granville Island Market Dinners to host his May 9 Wine Pairing Dinner, featuring *Beaufort Vineyard and Estate Winery* [5854 Pickering Road, Courtenay 250-338-1357 *www.beaufortwines.ca*]. Atlas Café [250-6th Street, Courtenay 250-338-9838] always gets strong reviews. Their fish tacos, duck breast, and baked brie are regular hits with me and my crowd. Owner Sandra Viney has done an outstanding job with her team, keeping service levels at Atlas consistently higher than pretty much anywhere inside or outside the region. (You can also experience her touch at **Avenue Bistro**.) A recent online poll of favourite Thai venues rated **Chiang Rai Noodle House** [1376 16th Ave, 250-286-8337] tops in Campbell River. With Ronnice telling us it is "VERY good, reasonably priced... my favourite place on the Island for Thai food...Their Green Curry is fantastic." In Courtenay, Julia (among many others) is a fan of **Kinaree** [526A Cumberland Road, 250-898-8639]: "pleasantly tasty, consistently fantastic meals." Best fine dining in Campbell River? My vote goes to the tiny **Angler's Dining Room** at Dolphins Resort [4125 Discovery Drive 1-800-891-0287 / *www.dolphinsresort.com*]. Things I'm looking forward to: the **4th Annual Comox Valley Shellfish Festival** [*www.comoxvalleyshellfishfestival.ca*] on June 19-20 (complete with "some excellent upgrades"). Tickets are already selling for this event held outdoors at Comox's Filberg Lodge and Marina Park. Finally, June 13 sees Vancouver's noted food photographer **Jackie Connelly** [*jackieconnelly.com*] at *Tria Culinary Studio* [4905 Darcy Road, Courtenay 250-338-9765 *www.triaculinarystudio.ca*] for a short "foodie foto workshop." *—by Hans Peter Meyer*

OKANAGAN

Internationally acclaimed local Winemaker **Tom Di Bello** has recently left **CedarCreek Winery** after 10 years and is excited to now be independently offering his sought after consulting services to other wineries.

Tinhorn Creek Vineyards has broken ground to begin construction on their newest venture, a restaurant venue in conjunction with Manuel Ferreira of Le Gavroche Restaurant in Vancouver. The stunning view will overlooks the South Okanagan.

Not surprisingly, new wineries are springing up all over our province. From **Volcanic Hills** in West Kelowna, **Rustico** in Oliver, **Okanagan Villa** and **The View** in Kelowna and **Edge of the Earth** in the North – one will never become bored of wine touring here in Okanagan Wine Country!

Salt Spring Island

AN EXTRAORDINARY CULINARY DESTINATION

Abundance. It is the word that runs through my mind every time I visit Salt Spring Island. It is an island of vineyard acreages of carefully cultivated terroir producing wines such as Pinot Noir, Pinot Gris and Maréchal Foch. Orchards heaving with fruit with flavours deep, intense and seductive and wild blackberry bushes so thick along the roadside the locals call the season "The Blackberry Plague." Here you will find world-class cheeses, some pungent, some soft and yielding, handcrafted locally, made from the fragrant milk of sleek goats and fat purebred Jersey cows. Walk to the end of the dock in Ganges and take your pick of fresh caught wild fish or monster crabs.

Salt Spring Island famed Farmers' Market starts in early spring when rhubarb, spring herbs and early season wild mushrooms are yielding up their goodness, having been foraged or harvested by local farmers who then offer up this bounty for sale. Strolling around the market square is to feel a kinship with the local Salt Spring residents, many of whom come to sell their goods and crafts, swap stories, sample each others' produce and support their local businesses. Everyone supports everyone else. Many of the local restaurants and inns further the relationship with Salt Spring Island's "eat local" philosophy supporting farmers, growers and producers by crafting menus that showcase local everything from, as the saying goes, soup to nuts. This is not so much The 100 Mile Diet as it is The 25 Kilometers in Any Direction Diet.

Salt Spring is an island of festivals for all five senses – apples, mushrooms, lavender, jazz and the arts – and that's a very small sampling of what goes on over 52 weeks. It also the land of Zen, yoga, aroma therapies, magic hand creams and lotions and potions for every part of the body, mind and spirit.

Salt Spring is new age meets any age. It is a timeless place that seems to have found its time and its place in our fast-paced world. It is a slower more gentle way to enjoy life, celebrate the seasons and reap and share abundance with those who live there, and with those who choose to come and "sit for a spell." ~ *Su Grimmer*

FEATURED BUSINESSSES

Congrats to **Kalala Organic Winery** in West Kelowna for its GOLD Medal win at the *Chardonnay du Monde* for their 2007 Chardonnay Icewine *www.kalalawines.ca*. Not alone in the Gold Medal arena, **Ex Nihilo Vineyards** of Lake Country, BC also took GOLD at the 2010 *Riesling Du Monde* in France for the 2nd year in a row! Make sure to visit them to check out their beautiful new winery. *www.exnihilovineyards.com*

Pizza lovers can now prepare a restaurant worthy pie at home without getting elbow deep in dough. Both **Valaroso Foods** in Kelowna along with local favorite meat shop **L&D Meats** in Guisachan Village (2365 Gordon Drive (250) 717-1997) now offer perfect, thin crust fresh pizza shells – made by local Chef **Grant de Montreuil**!

Other news from Valaroso Foods – their newly expanded shop is open! With more Italian goodies to offer, be prepared to load up a large bag on your next visit. The new deli section is also going to be offering Mama Valaroso's homemade dinners to go. Don't forget the takeaway grilled Panini sandwiches and a takeaway espresso from the coffee bar! 1467 Sutherland, (250) 860-3631.

Also new on the Okanagan chef scene, we welcome Chef **Michael Lyon** to the **Hotel Eldorado Dining Room** in Kelowna where he has recently launched a brand new menu. Chef Lyon comes to us from Banff and is two-time Gold Medal Plates winner. A Celebrity Chef in the works, he is also currently in the production of the *Food Network*'s next big series, Chef-Off! set to air in early summer. 500 Cook Road, (250) 763-7500.

Watch for the opening of the new lagoon side outdoor patio addition to the **Delta Grand Okanagan Resort & Conference Centre**. Chef **Stuart Klassen** and team are excited to be offering guests yet another beautiful option to enjoy their locally sourced, seasonal cuisine – with a view. *www.deltahotels.com* 1310 Water Street, Kelowna, (250) 763-4500

Chef **Bernard Casavant** has settled in to his new position at the helm of the **Wild Apple Restaurant & Lounge** in Kelowna's beautiful Manteo Resort. Locals were thrilled to welcome this world class chef to our home turf and are raving about his stellar cuisine. This lakeside venue is absolutely unstoppably Okanagan and will be a guaranteed food and wine lover's destination this summer. *www.manteo.com* 3762 Lakeshore Road, Kelowna, (250) 860-1031.

Following the Okanagan wine trail south from Kelowna, you will find another perfect venue to hang your straw hat in Summerland! **Local Lounge*Grille** has dropped into our culinary laps with a bang. Chef **Paul Cecconi** has been winning raves (and awards) for his fabulous "local" cuisine and with the **McWatters** family and **Cameron Bond** behind this label – guests will be able to fulfill their wine fantasies as well. A chic, modern interior and a dazzling lakeside patio...see you there. 12817 Lakeshore Drive South, (250) 494-8855 *www.thelocalgroup.ca*

More Kelowna news, The Kelowna Sandman Inn & Suites is excited to announce the opening of their new restaurant **Chop!** With a cool, sleek urbanesque ambiance Chop is described as a step up in sophistication from its sister restaurant **Moxies**. In wine country style, guests will be able to chill with a wine list offering a superb collection of local wines and order from a diverse, yet select menu. Chef **Michael Nezny**, formerly of **Chateau Lake Louise's** impressive culinary team, will be heading up this kitchen operation and is thrilled to have the opportunity to relocate to Kelowna. *www.sandmanhotels.com* 2130 Harvey Avenue (250) 860-6409. *–By Jennifer Schell*

celebrating the marriage of food and wine...












8th Annual

TOFINO FOOD AND WINE FESTIVAL

June 4 - 6, 2010

tofinofoodandwinefestival.com

A NEWS
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The WICKANINNISH INN & POINTE RESTAURANT
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BLACK ROCK OCEANFRONT RESORT

TOFINO

It's hard to believe we're gearing up for the 8th annual **Tofino Food and Wine Festival** this June. I remember the preparations for the first festival, when I worked with the organizers **Kira Rogers** and **Eli Blake** at the former Café Pamplona in the **Tofino Botanical Gardens** (now **Darwin's Café**) with Chef **Rick Moore**. They pulled the festival together with limited resources and lots of energy back then, and it's now grown into a hugely successful local event.

"After seven successful years, I really enjoy watching the festival grow, and seeing the energy and enthusiasm brought in by various people, including the winemakers, chefs, artists, musicians and the guests that are travelling to Tofino from all over wanting a unique culinary experience, grazing in the gardens, dining around town and strolling our pristine beaches," said Kira. "I see a lot of return guests, which makes me happy, and I love talking to newcomers as well."

This year's festival, sponsored by ***EAT***, runs from June 4 to 6, and the main event is Grazing in the Gardens at the botanical gardens on June 5 from 1-4pm. Wineries from around BC make the trip to serve up tastes alongside canapés by Tofino chefs and specialty purveyors. There's also a silent auction fundraiser for the Tofino Children's Centre and it's all set to live music by Dinah D's Contraband Swing Club and local DJ Kevin West in the funky and picturesque gardens. If you've never been, it's time to experience this yearly delight. Many other events make up the festival weekend, including at least two winemaker's dinners. **Shelter Restaurant** is hosting **Alderlea Vineyards**' **Roger** and **Nancy Dosman** on Thurs., June 3. The wine and food will be donated, with proceeds going to an as yet unnamed charity. Tickets to the dinner and vertical tasting will be sold in a raffle format. Seating is limited, visit *www.shelterrestaurant.com* or call 250 725-3353 to find out more. **The Wickaninnish Inn's Pointe Restaurant** is also hosting a dinner with **Harold Soon** of **Sandhill Winery** (*www.sandhillwines.ca*) on June 4. Visit *www.wickinn.com* or call 250 725-3100 for more information.

As for the other events, there will be a new one - a lingerie fashion show on Friday, June 4, with proceeds to the Children's Centre. Also, a winemaker's lunch at **Black Rock Resort** (*www.blackrockresort.com*), a function at **Long Beach Lodge Resort** (*www.longbeachlodgeresort.com*), and a cooking class with **SoBo Restaurant**'s (*www.sobo.ca*) **Lisa Ahier** and possibly **Vikram Vij** of **Vij's** (*www.vijs.ca*) in Vancouver are all in the works, says Kira. Watch also for **Terry David Mulligan** of the *Tasting Room* and the **A Channel**'s TV crew covering the festival. They along with **EAT Magazine** are the media sponsors, and **Shelter Restaurant**, **Tofino Vacation Rentals** and the **Wickaninnish Inn** are the confirmed event sponsors.

Kira will have all the events listed on the festival website in the upcoming weeks at *www.tofinofoodandwinefestival.com* and tickets are available online or by contacting the venues directly.

Congratulations to the big winner of the Martini Migration, **Long Beach Lodge Resort** (*www.longbeachlodgeresort.com*, 250 725-2442), who took home the best martini and best booth honours at the event held in March during the Pacific Rim Whale Festival. **Shelter Restaurant** was second in the best martini category and **Spotted Bear Bistro** (*www.spottedbearbistro.com*, 250 725-2215) won for the best original martini. I think it's pretty safe to say this was a fun evening for everyone who participated and attended!

LBL also welcomed a new chef recently. **Randy Jones** joined the restaurant brigade April 15 after 10 years at Whistler's **Steeps Grill and Wine Bar**. With a focus on local ingredients, Jones said he is looking to make guests' dining experiences at the Lodge as memorable as possible.

Like-minded chefs and restauranteurs have banded together on the West Coast to form the **Tofino and Ucluelet Culinary Guild**. The group's mission is to work closely with regional farmers, foragers and fishermen to bring farm-to-table practices to the area. While still in its infancy the group is already busy, they held their first fundraiser April 23 at the **Best Western Tin Wis Resort** (*www.tinwis.com*, 250 725-4445). I look forward to bringing you more news of this new locally minded group in future columns.

–by Jen Dart

reader recommended —by Rebecca Baugniet



Rebecca Wellmam

Pictured above: Owner Yasser Youssef

Mediterranean Specialty Foods at Lakehill Grocery

With so much happening on the Victoria food scene, some establishments and events inevitably slip under the EAT radar. For this reason, we always appreciate any "heads-ups" that our knowledgeable readers are inclined to share with us. Last month, we received an email from a reader reminding us about a little gem found on the corner of Quadra and Reynolds: the Lakehill Grocery.

Owned by Yasser Youssef, this corner of the Lakehill Village mall is home to an impressive variety of Mediterranean specialty foods (that is, in fact, what the sign on the building says, although the business's proper name is Lakehill Grocery). To follow up on our reader's gentle prodding, I went for a visit and came home with bags bursting with Mediterranean treats. When I first entered the shop, I was warmly greeted and offered tea or coffee. Sitting down at the counter with my cup of tea, I soon observed that this was not special treatment reserved for visiting food reporters. Everyone who entered the shop while I was there was genuinely welcomed. Most were regulars, greeted by name and a hearty handshake. But several first-time shoppers were also gladly received by Yasser, or his employees Charlie and Sylvia, given details about the selection of cheeses or olives, or whatever they had come looking for.

After my tea, I was given a complete tour of the shop by Yasser, who clearly takes great pride in offering his clientele such a beautiful selection of products. The first stop on the tour was the dip counter, where I sampled each of the exquisite dips made daily on site. From all accounts, this is what the store is best known for. The house specialty is the walnut dip, made according to Yasser's time-honoured family recipe and incorporating walnuts, red pepper and pomegranate molasses into a dip that boasts high levels of omega 3s, as well as being gluten-free. The feta spread, tzatziki and tapenade are all popular as well, and with good reason. Next I admired the cheeses, which include the hard-to-find Bulgarian kashkaval and the Greek kefalotiri (also known as saganaki cheese) alongside the cow, sheep and goat fetas. The colourful olive bar offers a choice of kalamata, Syrian, Moroccan, Turkish, Italian and Lebanese olives (conveniently all at the same price, so you can fill your container with a mix).

Yasser is well informed about each of the products he stocks. Leading me through the competitively priced olive oils and balsamic vinegars, he tells me why he favours the olive oil from Crete, explaining that the lack of industry and pollution on that island results in a cleaner, purer oil. He also points out the authentic certification on Italian olive oils, warning that there are many olive oils posing as Italian—he carries only the real deal.

Yasser proudly tells me how his customers hail from all over the Island and that some regulars even make the trip from the Penders and Salt Spring. He leads me to the canned good section, reporting that it is hard to keep these shelves stocked in boating season. (I pick up a can of dolmades.) Returning to the front of the store, I admire the beautiful cordials: rosewater, orange blossom water, pomegranate syrup and molasses, and eye the house-made falafel and spanakopita (the traditional spinach as well as a seasonal vegetable variety available daily). I'm offered more samples, but the dinner hour is approaching and I've got a Mediterranean feast in mind. I choose a selection of dips, olives, some sheep's feta and a few portions of spanakopita, then grab a bag of sangak—a two-foot-long, folded Persian flatbread. All that is required at home is to toss a quick Greek salad, and we're set to go. This could become a habit. I thank Yasser and direct a grateful thought to the kind reader who led me to this place. I know I'll be back.

If you have a food recommendation for us, please email *editor@eatmagazine.ca*

***Lakehill Grocery**, 3949 Quadra St., 250-727-3632*



EAT Magazine presents

drink

Satisfy Your Thirst

LARRY ARNOLD'S
Liquid Assets

NEW RELEASES
JoieFarm 2009

SPIRIT
Small batch bourbon

FEATURED REGION
New Zealand

ISLAND WINERY
Salt Spring Vineyard

2ND ANNUAL TASTE: VICTORIA'S FESTIVAL OF FOOD AND WINE

The province's capital will host a second annual festival focused on Vancouver Island cuisine and British Columbia wines this summer. Local culinary aficianado, Kathy McAree is pleased to announce the launch of **Taste: Victoria's Festival of Food and Wine** from July 15-18, 2010 in downtown Victoria and the Saanich peninsula. Taste will feature more than 10 events led by British Columbia food and wine personalities including Chef David Mincey and culinary Olympian Chef Brad Horen, as well as local Victoria Sommelier and Master of Wine student Louise Wilson. Festival guests will experience British Columbia wines and the coveted offerings of Vancouver Island's artisan producers, growers, farmers, fishers, and chefs. The weekend kicks-off Thursday, July 15 with the The Main Event, an evening of BC wine tasting along with offerings of fresh and seasonal Vancouver Island cuisine at the Crystal Garden in downtown Victoria. Wine and food seminars July 16, 17 and 18 include "Sips and Seafood" on Victoria's inner harbour seashore at the Inn at Laurel Point, "Pig and Pinot on the Patio" with a pig roast right downtown at the Hotel Grand Pacific, an inside look at BC's seafood industry at Finest At Sea along with "Chocoholics Anonymous" with chef David Mincey. A special trade tasting of British Columbia wines will take place prior to The Main Event for accredited food and beverage professionals. Further information on Taste 2010 events will be released in May with details at www.VictoriaTaste.com.

Visit **www.eatmagazine.ca** for more **DRINK**

liquid assets — by Larry Arnold

NEW WORLD

BUBBLE

Sacchetto Owl Face Prosecco
Italy $16.00-17.00
Excellent as an aperitif any time of the day! This charming little bubble from the hills of Trivento is soft and fruity with subtle apple blossom and citrus aromas. Very fresh with a gentle mousse and lovely balance.

WHITE

Red Rooster Pinot Blanc '08
British Columbia $17.00-18.00
Dang, this is one heck of a Pinot Blanc! Clean, fresh and relatively dry with soft floral and apple aromas, lively acidity and a pleasant fruity finish.

Quails' Gate Chenin Blanc '08
British Columbia $18.00-20.00
Steely with vibrant citrus, white honey and slate aromas that persist through the palate. Balanced with a slightly oily texture and mouth-watering acidity. Intense and expressive and definitely not for the feint of heart! A very good bottle of wine that has not been overworked or dumbed down for the gurus in marketing.

Spier Signature Chenin Blanc '09
South Africa $14.00-16.00
Established in 1712 in the heart of Stellenbosch, Spier is one of the oldest wineies in South Africa. The vineyards are now managed using Biodynamic techniques and the results are nothing short of miraculous! Very floral on the nose with lovely citrus and tropical fruit flavours held in check by a slash of mouthwatering acidity that just goes on and on.

Concha y Toro LH Sauvignon Blanc '06
Chile $14.00-15.00
Simply gorgeous with plush layers of concentrated fruit and a fat unctuous texture held in check with a slash of acidity. Outstanding.

Fairview Cellars LH Riesling '08
British Columbia $30.00-33.00
A superb wine, powerful and lush with exotic spice, peach and apricot flavours with a finish that will keep you coming back for more. Superb.

Castillo De Molina Sauvignon Blanc '09
Chile $18.00-20.00
Pleasure sometimes comes from unexpected quarters. Big, bold and bursting with zesty lime, grapefruit and passion fruit aromas that expand through the palate picking up citrus and minerals notes as it opens up. Nicely balanced with good length and a clean fresh finish.

RED

Finca Las Moras Tannat '06
Argentina $16.00-18.00
Dark and powerful with concentrated blackberry, vanilla and spice flavours. Full-bodied and brooding with a gritty tannic finish.

Pisano Rio De Los Pajaros Tannat Reserve '07 Uruguay $20.60-22.00
This hearty tannat from the sun-drenched vineyards of Uruguay is a veritable powerhouse, full-bodied and brooding on the palate with ripe berry flavours, gritty firm tannins and an attractive persistent finish that gives us hope.

Don Domenico Finca Cabernet Franc '08
Argentina $20.00-23.00
A generously endowed, organically grown Cab Franc that mounts a full-scale assault on your palate the moment the cork is broached. There is nothing subtle about this wine! It is a full-bodied with dense fruit flavours and a ripe fleshy palate.

OLD WORLD

RED

Nobili Palazzoli Primitivo '08
Italy $13.00-14.00
Here is a little cheap and cheerful red to wash down a pizza or two while watching the Canucks drive for the cup. Medium-bodied, with ripe berry and dusty earth flavours that open up and put on weight with a few moments in the glass. Soft, fruity and very approachable.

Negrar Valpolicella "Le Roselle" Ripasso '06 Italy $21.00-23.00
There's a lot going on here, with layers of red cherry, earth and exotic spice flavours. Nicely balanced with a supple texture and a rich spicy finish.

SALT SPRING VINEYARDS

The winery's new owners are eager to experience the island's unique microclimate after 25 years growing grapes and making wine in the Fraser Valley.

Best Vintages: (current owners have had only two years on the property)
Tasting Room Hours: Daily, 11 a.m. - 5 p.m., from June 14 -Sept. 1; Saturdays noon-5 p.m. (or as indicated on website) Oct., Dec. and March-June 13.
Web: www.saltspringvineyards.com
Phone: 250-653-9463
Address: 151 Lee Rd., Salt Spring Island, B.C. V8K 2A5

Joanne and Dev McIntyre have owned Salt Spring Vineyards for only two years, but they have more than two decades of experience growing cool-climate grapes in western B.C. The couple, who purchased the winery from founders Jan and Bill Harkely in 2007, were perfectly suited to take on this endeavour, though they came to it with a slightly different—yet entirely relevant—geographic perspective. "Twenty-five years ago, long before there was really any grapes being grown on the coast, we started a little experimental vineyard in our acreage [in the Fraser Valley]," says Joanne McIntyre about their early interest in wine and grape growing. "There was a very keen group of people over there at the time called the Fraser Valley Grape Growers Association that got together to see if grapes could grow [in western B.C.]. We were growing grapes and making wine for 25 years over there on just a hobby basis."

Though Salt Spring's climate is somewhat different than the Fraser Valley—McIntyre describes it as a drier microclimate—the challenges of growing grapes are much the same throughout what McIntyre refers to as the "coastal" area—Fraser Valley, the Gulf Islands and Vancouver Island. Naturally, cool-climate varieties—from the Pinots (Noir and Gris) to the Riesling crosses (Ortega, Bacchus, Muller-Thurgau) and hybrids (Marechal Foch, Leon Millot)—are what do best here. The McIntyres, who already possess an understanding of this from the years spent in their experimental vineyard, clearly embrace this.

The three-and-a-half-acre vineyard that came with the Salt Spring Winery when they purchased it was, of course, planted with some of these same varieties, but additional grapes are sourced across the road at their winemaker Paul Troop's 10-acre vineyard as well as from select Salt Spring and Vancouver Island growers. They also make one wine sourced from Okanagan grapes (a Merlot). But the McIntyres know that ultimately the success of the island wine industry lies in making wines from local grapes that truly represent the area's strengths—in spite of the sometimes less than ideal growing conditions. "That's what this region has to do," she states. "It has to, every year, consistently make good wines, even when the weather is not as cooperative as it was [in 2009]."

It's basically like that old saw goes, "When life gives you lemons, make lemonade." In 2008, the McIntyres' first vintage, a "cold, rainy summer," tested their fortitude right away and they were forced to make the best out of a tricky situation. "It was not a good year," says Joanne. "It's a testimony to Paul Troop's abilities as a winemaker that the wines were so good. When the fruit came in I was frightened that we wouldn't have a vintage. But Paul made some excellent wines. Even in a not-so-good year, with a talented winemaker you can produce good wine."

Though they didn't find their Pinot Noir grapes to be of sufficient high quality to make a Reserve vintage in 2008, Troop nonetheless produced a deliciously lip-smacking and fruity *blanc de noir rosé* that sold out very quickly and was a popular summer sipper. Things look much easier for the 2009 vintage."This year is the exact opposite [of 2008], says Joanne. "It was a phenomenal year and it's going to be a wonderful vintage."

Salt Spring Vineyards' lineup of offerings totals about 2,200 cases a year and normally features island vinifera essentials like Pinot Gris, Pinot Noir and a sparkling wine made from Pinot Noir and Chardonnay, as well as an organic apple-based dessert wine and organic blackberry port. Their Aromata is a blend of locally sourced cool-climate aromatic white varieties, while the Millotage is a blend of two hybrids—Marechal Foch and Leon Millot—that makes a nice table red, perfect for serving with hearty tomato-based pasta dishes. Like Alderlea and Averill Creek on Vancouver Island, the McIntyres are also utilizing some of the Valentien Blattner hybrid varieties in hopes that these vines will be able to produce big, mouth-filling reds in our cooler growing climate. They have already released a Cabernet Libre.

Perhaps one day these locally grown reds may replace the Okanagan-sourced Merlot in Salt Spring Vineyards' lineup. One thing is certain: the McIntyres, who retired from previous busy careers on the mainland to own the winery, don't want to grow much beyond what they're producing right now. "We may take it to 2,500 because of our Champagne-style wine," says Joanne, "but we want to keep it small and good. Our aim really is to make excellent wines, not volume wines. We're not in this to make a big commercial winery. This is our passion, really, and our size is good."

A JOYOUS OCCASION

new releases from JoieFarm



G, Hymes

Any occasion can be turned into a joyous occasion in my book – just open a bottle of JoieFarm Wine. Owned and operated by a sommelier and chef (great sign # 1) Michael Dinn and Heidi Noble's Naramata winery has been garnering attention and acclaim since it opened the fall of 2002. Originating as Joie, the French word for 'Joy', the property has been a constantly evolving concept that began as a guesthouse and critically acclaimed en plein air cooking school, located in their orchard. Over time, the orchard was converted to grape vines and a new winery building was built on the property. Heidi released an award winning book, *Menus from an Orchard Table*, chronicling the cooking school and terroir-based recipes of Naramata. With the addition of their own estate grown fruit in 2009, they changed their name to JoieFarm to better reflect their connection to the land. Heidi and Michael's interest is focused exclusively in the grape varieties of Alsace and Burgundy (great sign #2) – an excellent fit the cool-climate, desert landscape of the Okanagan.

This week it was announced that JoieFarm was named "2010 British Columbia Winery of the Year" by *Wine Press Northwest* in the spring edition of their magazine. This award is selected by the editors of Wine Press Northwest based on blind tastings, visits, accolades and other considerations. Last fall, in Wine Press Northwest's Platinum Judging, their JoieFarm 2008 Riesling finished No. 1 out of 450 gold medal-winning wines, making it "the best of the best in the Great Northwest." Remarkably, the 2008 Noble Blend finished No. 2!Along with the season's first flowers, Joie's spring releases arrived a couple of weeks ago. For those who aren't very familiar with the Muscat grape, it is known as being the 'grapiest' varietal. By this I mean the wine tastes exactly like the fruit from which it's made – GRAPES. JoieFarm Muscat bursts forth with spiced floral aromas, fruity sweet candied grape flavours, a shish of anise and perfumed white peach. Crisp and dry, the bright acid checks the grapey sweetness to strike a beautiful, delicate balance, and a lemony mouth watering exit. This is already sold out at the winery, so buddy up to your local private liquor store or lucky restaurateur for a taste.

Now a BC icon, JoieFarm Rosé has time and time again taught people to 'rethink pink'. The 2009 vintage will continue the conversion quest. Light bodied and elegant, this year's Rosé is a blend of Pinot Noir, Gamay, Pinot Meunier and Pinot Gris. Amazing aromas of wild strawberry, mineral and spice leads to a textured palate of cherry, raspberry, and crisp pear. Structured and refreshing – always a winning combo! Heidi and Michael have said they craft their wines to be food-friendly, and the lower alcohol, bright acid, slight kiss of sweetness and lengthy, juicy, citrus finish invite pairing this bottle with a wide range of foods. *—By Teve Ring, Online DRINK editor*

JoieFarm Wine, Naramata, BC
Muscat 2009, ($23-26)
Rosé 2009, ($21-24)
www.joiefarm.com

SEEING RED

New Zealand's Pinot Noirs, Syrahs and Bordeaux blends prove the country's wine regions aren't colour-blind.



Michaela Morris and Michelle Bouffard

View from Rippon Vineyards, overlooking Lake Wanaka

New Zealand has created a niche for itself quenching everyone's thirst with Marlborough Sauvignon Blanc. Pungent grassy and gooseberry aromas transport you to this tiny faraway country teeming with grazing sheep and blessed with stunning scenery. The country's "green" image lives up to our expectations, yet as the days pass it reveals another side. Amid copious amounts of vibrant whites, our palates are refreshed with intriguing reds. Kiwi winemakers are out to prove that New Zealand isn't a one-trick pony.

New Zealand won't abandon her "savvies." Sauvignon Blanc still accounts for more than 60 percent of production. But Pinot Noir is the new darling and recently became the second most planted grape. If Marlborough is synonymous with Sauvignon Blanc, Central Otago is tantamount to Pinot Noir. Even winemakers established in other regions are scrambling to make a Pinot Noir from Central Otago grapes.

Surrounded by mountains and peppered with lakes, rivers and gorges, Central Otago is one of the most breathtaking wine regions in New Zealand. With a sense of pride, we note how similar it is to the Okanagan. Only the native cabbage trees remind us how far from home we are. We blame the intoxicating sweet purple thyme that covers the hills and lingers in the air for forgetting which side of the road we should be driving on. Film buffs take note: this is the setting of the Lord of the Rings trilogy. We literally run into truckloads of obsessed groupies touring the film's locations.

Central Otago is New Zealand's only inland region. A continental climate gives high daytime temperatures and cool nights, which preserves both acidity and aromas. While the cooler outlying valleys of Alexandra, Gibbston and Wanaka are home of the area's first plantings, the warmer Cromwell basin has become the heart of the region. There is much talk about the different sub-regions, but at present, producers and yields have a greater impact on style. Generally, the wines offer darker fruit flavours with an underlying meatiness. The best are captivating and earthy, with thyme and even truffly aromas.

Winemaker at the renowned Felton Road winery, Blair Walter is the best guide to Central Otago. After receiving him on numerous occasions in Vancouver, we are thrilled to finally visit him on his own turf. Central Otago's dry climate lends itself to organic viticulture. At Felton Road, the team takes it even further, growing their grapes according to biodynamic principals. Besides showing off the healthy vines and soils, our host is excited to introduce us to the chickens and goats that roam the property. The latter graze on the non-native rosehip, which grows like a weed. As for the chickens, they fly directly into his car when he calls to them. He collects their freshly laid eggs to make us eggs Benedict.

Blair Walter doesn't let us leave without visiting Rippon Vineyard in Wanaka. In the far north of Central Otago, it is the most photogenic and photographed vineyard in the world, where snow-capped mountains loom above the lake and co-exist with cabbage trees and vines. The wines from Rippon are equally spectacular and we even dare a comparison with Burgundy. There is no doubt that Rippon and Felton Road's wines are the pinnacle of the region. Enjoying them in the company of the respective winemakers we feel truly blessed. For less expensive alternatives, both Mud House and Kim Crawford give a delicious introduction to the area.

To add to the excitement of our Central Otago experience, we go bungee jumping at the world's first commercial site: the Kawarau River Bridge. The kind folk at the beautiful Chard Farm winery fill our wineglasses with plenty of Dutch courage before our jump. Still, the only way we can take the leap is going tandem and clinging desperately to each other.

While the current buzz is all about Central Otago, Pinot Noir was established in the district of Martinborough a decade earlier. At the lower end of the North Island, Martinborough is a sub-region of Wairarapa. Strong Antarctic winds encourage the grapes to develop thicker skins yielding fairly robust and tannic Pinot Noir. High gravel in the soil inhibits vigour, producing naturally low yields and the long cool season gives density, intensity and richness. Cool temperatures and howling winds make growing grapes in this area challenging. A pioneer in the region, Clive Paton took a risk establishing Ata Rangi in 1980. What sets his Pinot Noir apart specifically? Paton likes to tell the story of the infamous Abel clone. Malcolm Abel was a customs officer who confiscated Pinot Noir cuttings imported from Burgundy's legendary Domaine de la Romanée-Conti. After a sufficient quarantine period, he planted them out giving cuttings to Paton. While some might attribute the quality of Ata Rangi's wine to the Abel Clone, there is much more than that to the winery. We receive a warm welcome from Clive Paton, his wife Phyllis Pattie and winemaker Helen Masters. As they simultaneously tease and listen to one another, their camaraderie, passion and knowledge are palpable.

Marlborough is undoubtedly a Sauvignon Blanc kingdom, but most producers in this region also have a Pinot Noir in their roster. In fact, almost half of the Pinot Noir produced in New Zealand is grown in Marlborough. Many are unfortunately on the skinny side with pronounced green notes. Perhaps winemakers are too distracted by Sauvignon Blanc. Better examples are light and refreshing with bright red cherry flavours such as those from Oyster Bay and Kim Crawford. The wine that really tipped us off to Pinot's potential in Marlborough is Dog Point. Co-owners Ivan Sutherland and James Healy were part of the team at Cloudy Bay that originally put Marlborough Sauvignon Blanc on the map. They launched their own label in 2002 using grapes from the Dog Point Vineyard that Sutherland planted back in 1979. Years of experience and a great understanding of the terroir are evident in their wine. While the Pinot Noir is of a delicate style with flavours in the red fruit spectrum, it is highly concentrated and complex. Dinner with Sutherland, Healy and their families is as instructional as it is entertaining. Laughter and great wines keep us going until the wee hours. Luckily our beds are within stumbling distance and we wake up the next morning to a divine breakfast spread. Have we died and gone to heaven? Dog Point's Bell Tower Lodge is an absolute must-stay.

New Zealand's foray into reds does not end with Pinot Noir. On the east coast of the North Island, Hawke's Bay is one of New Zealand's warmest regions and the only major one capable of producing fuller bodied reds. With 25 different types of soil, it is also the country's most diverse. Associated with high quality Bordeaux-style wines, the Gimblett Gravels zone is the most well-established and often cited on wine labels. These blends of Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot are firmly structured with notes of sweet tobacco, pencil shaving and cassis. The latest hype in Hawke's Bay is Syrah and in our minds is more exciting. From the Gimblett Gravels, it is just as firm as the Bordeaux blends and often quite austere. We have a weakness for the lush, voluptuous examples coming out of the neighbouring "Triangle" district on red metal soils. Paritua in particular crafts a very seductive Syrah. Yet another expression of Syrah emerges from the Te Awanga zone, right on the coast. With lifted aromas and freshness, Elephant Hill's Syrah approaches those from Crozes-Hermitage in the northern Rhône wine region of France. If you find yourself in the area, stop by this stunning winery for dinner and watch the sun set over Cape Kidnappers.

Now is a great time to discover New Zealand reds. The country was featured at the recent Vancouver Playhouse International Wine Festival so wine store shelves are well-stocked with fantastic examples. As the weather warms up, we'll still keep drinking those refreshing savvies. Only now, we will mix it up with something red. Be it Pinot Noir, Syrah or a Bordeaux blend, we'll have no trouble finding the right occasion to drink New Zealand red, and we will think fondly of our Kiwi tiki tour.

New Zealand Tasting Notes

RED

2008 Mud House, Pinot Noir, Central Otago, $22.99
Appealing cherry and truffles aromas that repeat on the palate. A lighter style of Pinot Noir from Central Otago with crunchy red fruits and bright acidity. Hello salmon.

2008 Oyster Bay, Pinot Noir, Marlborough, $24.99
Bursting with aromas of strawberries and vanilla. Just as friendly on the palate with equally pleasing flavours. Simple and well made, this is a good option for a less-expensive Pinot Noir. House wine Pinot?

2008 Ata Rangi, 'Crimson' Pinot Noir, Martinborough, $27.99
Delicate and elegant notes of sweet cherries, strawberries and vanilla with a silky texture and lingering, refreshing, mineral notes. A fine Pinot Noir for the price.
*Note that sales of this wine support the conservation of New Zealand's beautiful native Pohutukawa tree, whose bright red flowers burst into bloom in December.

2007 Kim Crawford, Pinot Noir, Central Otago, $34.99
Lush and juicy flavours of cherry explode on the palate and leave you wanting many more sips. This fuller style will work like a charm with grilled salmon and pork. (It's almost as thrilling as our bungee jump in Queenstown.)

2007 Waitiri Creek, Pinot Noir, Central Otago, $52-58*
We are transported to Central Otago as soon as we bring the glass to our nose. Intense yet lifted floral aromas and flavours of deep currant, sweet raspberries with slight prune notes. Rich succulent texture. A great match with duck and black cherries.

2007 Rippon, Pinot Noir, Central Otago, $70-80*
The complexity of this wine is impressive. We can't help but make the parallel with top Burgundies. Not surprising when you know that Nick, the winemaker, spent many years working with the best Burgundy producers, including Domaine de la Romanée-Conti. Ah, our soul and thirst for Pinot are satiated.

2008 Felton Road, 'Calvert' Pinot Noir, Central Otago, $75-85*
Stunning, youthful aromas of fresh cherries, raspberries and thyme with complex mineral notes on the palate. Very young right now and will show its full potential over the next few years. If you can't wait that long, decant it and serve with rabbit or pork. You are in for a treat!

2007 Elephant Hill, Syrah, Hawke's Bay, $29-33*
Peppery with violet and gamey notes. A leaner Syrah that calls for a piece of wild bloody meat. Very much in the style of a Crozes-Hermitage and requires food to be fully appreciated.

2007 Paritua, Syrah, Hawke's Bay, $49-55*
This might just be the Marilyn Monroe of New Zealand Syrah. Voluptuous and curvy with plump seductive flavours of black plums and smoke. The pleasant gaminess makes it an ideal match with venison.

**Available at private wine stores only. Prices may vary.*

Cherry Point Vineyards: New owners, new beginnings.

Xavier and **Maria Clara Bonilla** are the new owners of Cherry Point Vineyards in the Cowichan Valley. The winery, which produces roughly 6,000 cases of wine annually, will experience a brand-new beginning within the burgeoning Vancouver Island wine industry.

Xavier Bonilla spoke with Cherry Point founders Wayne and Helena Ulrich some seven years ago when the couple was first looking for a B.C. vineyard to purchase. The Ulrichs eventually sold to Khowutzun Development Corporation, the economic development arm of the Cowichan Tribes, which ran Cherry Point for six years. Previously a dairy farmer in his native Ecuador and Colombia, he saw great potential in the farm as a business and as a home for his family. Maria Clara Bonilla, a native of Bogata, Columbia, is a professional translator proficient in Spanish, English and French. Their entrepreneurial spirit found them buying and selling businesses from coffee roasting to lawn care, and they ran their own high-end restaurant called Cello in West Van (Google "paella Bonilla"!).

Together, Xavier and Maria Clara plan to raise the quality of the wine as well as create a warm and friendly atmosphere, welcoming the public and community to the vineyard's beautiful grounds and property. Maria Clara will be in charge of the bistro, where they intend to make many changes, which include Mediterranean-style cuisine along with a touch of Spanish tapas made with local ingredients, of course.

Their children, now grown, will be a part of the new business and have already been home from university helping to bottle wine and turn the Cherry Point main building back into a house and home. Daughter Antonia continues at UBC in Vancouver after receiving a master's degree in French Literature in Paris and son Emilio is completing a degree in economic development, also at UBC.

Winemaker Simon Spencer is staying on, along with Laurina Ross, the wine shop manager. Located just off the highway near Cowichan Bay Village, the vineyard is a great spot to drop in; it's open 10 a.m.-5 p.m. seven days a week. Xavier wants Cherry Point to be a warm and friendly experience for all. "Our door is open and everyone is welcome." *—By Kathryn McAree*

www.cherrypointestatewines.com

the **mixologist** —by **Solomon Siegel**

BOUTIQUE BOURBONS

In the fine art of bourbon-making, these small-batch whiskies must be blended from less than 20 different barrels

As Canadians, we do some America-bashing from time to time. Between what passes for cheese in the 50 states and their bland, mass-market beer, perhaps it is deserved. However, after a dram of small-batch bourbon, all is forgiven. Whiskey is a refined sort of pleasure.

Let's start with some definitions. Bourbon is a type of whiskey, like Scotch and Canadian whiskey. And whiskey is, in essence, distilled beer. When making whiskey, you cook the grains (barley, corn, rye, or even rice), allow fermenting to occur, distill it and then age it, usually in oak barrels. To qualify as bourbon, a few more rules apply. It must be made in the U.S. (while it is strongly associated with Kentucky and is named for one of that state's counties, it is made in other states). It must be at least 51-percent corn, distilled no higher than 80 percent, and aged at least two years in new charred American oak barrels at no higher than 62.5 percent alcohol (and at least four years if there is no age label on the bottle). Bourbon is bottled no lower than 40-percent alcohol. If there is an age statement on the bottle, it must be the youngest whiskey in the blend. No caramel colour is allowed to be added.

Small-batch bourbon is not a controlled name but refers to bourbon blended from between one and 20 individual barrels (as opposed to 200 or more barrels to produce a mass-market blend). All these rules make small-batch bourbons the antithesis of the bland, mass-produced varieties.

What does it take for a bourbon to be considered great? Great bourbon is an artistic balance of flavours and mouth-feel. You should be able to taste the corn and hints of rye or barley. The toasted oak expresses itself as vanilla, caramel, spices or even smoke. The spirit should be alive in your mouth and almost dance on your tongue.

It's hard to find a broad variety of bourbons in British Columbia, especially the limited-release, small-batch type. Two good small-batch bourbons that are easy to find in B.C. liquor stores, however, are Bulleit and Maker's Mark. They are both solid bourbons and are terrific, either neat or mixed in a cocktail. Bulleit contains very high rye content, which is evident on the nose as the rye jumps out the glass with a charcoal and oak backbone. The mouth-feel is a tad viscous but velvety; one can taste sweet nutty spices with a hint of dried fruit and bitter chocolate.

Maker's Mark is a crowd-pleaser for good reason, and even the best stocked bar seems incomplete without the iconic red-wax-dipped bottleneck. With no more than 19 barrels used in each blend, it really is small-batch. The nose recalls the smell of crushed corn. Maker's is a lighter barrel toast then most bourbons, which lets the oak stand out like it was fresh-cut. In the mouth, you taste roasted red apples, cloves, vanilla and peaches with honey. Maker's finish is long and smooth and leaves your mouth with its signature tingle. And it truly is the perfect whiskey to use in a julep cocktail.

Harder to find are single-barrel bourbons like Hancock's President's Reserve. This whiskey made me chuckle the first time I tried it. The nose is restrained and subtle, with orange rind and vanilla notes and smooth round grain. The mouth-feel is very creamy and luxurious and might tempt you to just keep it in your mouth if it were not so tasty. The finish is what made me chuckle aloud as the flavours not only continue but evolve in your mouth minutes later. What starts as cream, rye bread and citrus continues on to cherry, oak, caramel and custard. A superb example of single-barrel bourbon.

The Cocktail

The julep predates the cocktail as its own class of drink, as revealed in the 1862 classic *The Bar Tender's Guide* written by the father of American mixology, New York City bartender Jerry Thomas. A mint julep is classically made with brandy, but what we're really after here is a whiskey julep. The mint leaf contains chlorophyll, which is bitter, but also contains the mint oil we want in the drink. Your julep needs to be treated gently; the mint should be pressed or slapped, not muddled. If your julep has little torn-up pieces of mint in it, the julep has been made incorrectly.

A whiskey julep should traditionally be made in a julep cup, which is a silver or metal cup that holds about 250 mL (one cup). Start with a tablespoon of pulverized white sugar (pounding regular sugar in a mortar or a clean coffee grinder works well), add two tablespoons of water and stir until the sugar is totally dissolved. Add three or four sprigs of mint and press gently with a bar spoon to release the oils, not breaking the leaves. Continue to add 90 mL (3 oz.) of bourbon (if you make this drink with less alcohol, it becomes a "whiskey smash"); stir again. Fill the glass with finely crushed ice, stir, add a drizzle of Jamaican rum over top and finally garnish with sprigs of fresh mint. In the words of Jerry Thomas, "You have a julep fit for an emperor!"

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